

# GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS"

<http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

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## Changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—Effective May 24, 2011

The Americans with Disabilities (ADA) regulations has changes going into effect on May 24, 2011.

*The Amendments Act makes important changes to the definition of the term "disability" by rejecting the holdings in several Supreme Court decisions and portions of the EEOC's ADA regulations. The effect of these changes is to make it easier for an individual seeking protection under the ADA to establish that he or she has a disability within the meaning of the ADA.*

To read the updated regulations, go to:

[ADA regulations](#)

## Resident Sues City for Denying Access to Report on Hazardous Mold

A Calabasas, California, homeowner is suing the city, alleging that officials denied her access to records of an inspection conducted at a neighboring home that reportedly contains hazardous mold.

Seeking a judge's help to get the city to comply, resident Gail Reznik and the First Amendment Coalition filed the lawsuit with the Los Angeles County Superior Court on Tuesday.

The property has been vacant for "many years," according to the lawsuit. After receiving complaints from numerous residents, including Reznik, about mold and visual blight, the city obtained a warrant from an L.A. County Superior Court judge to carry out an inspection of the home.

Reznik said that contaminants given off by the mold could have been responsible for her daughter's recurrent fungal infection and possibly caused a neighbor to contract a fungal respiratory illness, according to the lawsuit.

Wanting to learn more about the potential hazards at the home and to inform her neighbors, Reznik, who also lives on Lost Springs Dr., filed a public records request with the city earlier this year to obtain copies of the inspection, according to the lawsuit.

But Reznik was told by city officials that due to various circumstances, public access to the inspection documents is exempt from the California Public Records Act (CPRA). Judy Alexander, an attorney representing Reznik and the First Amendment Coalition, disputes the city's reasoning, especially when the municipal body tried to categorize itself as a law enforcement agency.

[Resident Sues City for Denying Access to Report](#)

See *Misery Could Soon be Over* on page 2

## Misery Could Soon Be Over for Elderly Residents in United Kingdom

A group of elderly people who have suffered years of damp and mould in their council bungalows in Goole are celebrating after being told their misery could soon be over.

The residents of a number of properties in Northway, Belvedere Crescent and Ilkeston Avenue have had to contend with wet walls, black and green mould and peeling wallpaper for more years than they can remember.

One resident said she had been complaining about the situation since she moved into her Belvedere Crescent home 12 years ago. "I kept ringing the council at first but got nowhere and so gave up but I have neighbours who have continued contacting and contacting the council for many years," said the resident, who did not wish to be named.

"The top of the bedroom wall has been wet and black with mould spores and then water started to come down the hall walls and when you walk across the floors you can tell they are loose.

"It is horrible and it smells, particularly in the bad weather and I have been told that it is dangerous to breathe in the black spores as they can cause cancer."

### Misery Could Soon be Over for Elderly Residents



*Councilor Keith Moore inspecting a damp wall*



## Wake Up to Clean Air (article from Dubai, United Arab Emirates)

There has been a dramatic increase of respiratory allergies and asthma throughout the Gulf region, including the UAE, over the last few years. Studies show that the prevalence of diagnosed asthma and allergic rhinitis amongst school children in the UAE is 13.65% and 22.9% respectively.

In the UAE, there are prevailing environmental conditions that encourage a preponderance of certain allergens – the high humidity and temperature support the reproduction of house dust mites (HDM) in the home and it is estimated that around 80-90% of allergic patients have allergy to HDM, humidity provides a perfect environment for mould to grow in air-conditioning systems of cars and buildings, and increased vegetation.

According to the Environment Agency in Abu Dhabi (EAD), indoor air pollution is a growing health concern, ranked the second highest environmental risk in the UAE.

Such statistics have encouraged governments and schools in the region to take a serious view of the problem. The Dubai Health Authority announced in 2010 that it intends to transform the UAE into a leader in respiratory care, in light of recent research that showed the UAE to have one of the highest rates of asthma in the world, with a 13% diagnosis rate.

### Wake Up to Clean Air

See 2011 QuickGuide to Indoor Air Quality on page 3

## New 2011 QuickGuide to Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

The Healthy House Institute (HHI) and the Home Ventilating Institute (HVI) have announced the release of the 2011 QuickGuide to Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) - a concise mini-guide with checklists to help consumers identify simple steps to make their indoor air healthier. The full QuickGuide text is included below and the formatted full-color version can be downloaded as a PDF from the News section of the HHI website.

The following topics are included in the QuickGuide:

**Dirt and Dust:** Outdoor soil can contain fertilizer, pesticides and more. Tracked in, it becomes part of the indoor dust, which already holds dander, dust mites, plastics, possibly lead or asbestos from indoor sources, etc. As dust becomes airborne, these substances may enter the body and cause symptoms ranging from asthma and allergy flare-ups to even nervous system damage and cancer.

**Mold:** Airborne mold spores and mold fragments can trigger asthma and allergy episodes.

**VOCs:** Volatile organic compounds are found in cleaning liquids, paints, solvents and many more household supplies. They volatilize or “off gas” into the air. Not all are harmful, but at high levels, many can cause a range of symptoms from short-term irritation to more ominous organ damage and cancer.

**Formaldehyde:** This VOC is used in a wide variety of household products. Manufacturers have scaled back — but in many cases not eliminated — its use. It is a known carcinogen and may also trigger asthma attacks and irritate the eyes and respiratory system. Off gassing can continue for years, decreasing over time.

**Asbestos:** Found in some insulation, fireproofing materials, acoustic tile and “popcorn” ceilings, these tiny particles can cause lung-tissue damage and cancer. Asbestos containing materials are harmless as long as they stay intact, but disintegration frees the fibers to enter the airspace and the lungs.



## New 2011 QuickGuide to Indoor Air Quality (continued)

**Lead:** Damaging to the nervous system, lead can enter the air as dust. Blood lead levels have dropped dramatically since the 1980s, indicating that unleaded gasoline and strategies regarding lead paint and lead pipes are working. Continued vigilance in the home is recommended, especially if your home is older.

**Moisture:** Water leaks and high relative humidity encourage mold growth, dust mite proliferation and increased formaldehyde emissions from building materials, furnishings and other household items. These irritants can trigger allergy and asthma symptoms.

**Carbon Monoxide:** Fuel-burning appliances and idling cars in attached garages can release carbon monoxide into the home, causing about 500 preventable deaths each year. The gas causes thousands more to become ill.

**Radon:** Radioactive gas can cause lung cancer. The EPA estimates radon causes 21,000 preventable deaths each year.

[News article about the New QuickGuide](#)

[2011 QuickGuide to Indoor Air Quality](#)

See *Member Profile: Jack Thrasher, Ph.D.* on page 4

### Member Profile: Jack Thrasher, Ph.D.

Dr. Thrasher received a B.S. Degree in 1959 from California State University, Long Beach, and a Ph.D. from U.C.L.A. School of Medicine in 1964. He has taught medical students at both University of Colorado and U.C.L.A. on the subjects of cell biology, human anatomy, microscopic anatomy, physiology and embryology. He has specialized in toxicology since 1966 and Immunotoxicology since 1986. He has been a consultant to toxicology laboratories and three human diagnostic laboratories. He has also been an expert witness in defense and plaintiff cases.

Dr. Thrasher has published peer-reviewed research papers on the toxic effects of various chemicals on animals and humans. These include the Immunotoxicology of formaldehyde, organophosphate insecticides, chlorinated insecticides, solvents, isocyanates hydrogen sulfide, and molds/bacteria in water-damaged homes and buildings.

Dr. Thrasher also consults to the nonprofit organization "National Toxic Encephalopathy Foundation" and has assisted NTEF in the filing of petitions regarding toxic chemicals present in cosmetics and perfumes. NTEF has been awarded the HonCode.

<http://national-toxic-encephalopathy-foundation.org/>

Dr. Thrasher has two daughters, Kristen and Traci. His hobbies include: 1) Forensic toxicology of water-damaged buildings; 2) Golf; 3) Camping and trout fishing in the High Sierras; and 4) Devoted companion to Sandra. He also enjoys working with treating physicians regarding understanding of the health effects associated with exposure to microbes in water-damaged buildings. In addition, he often gives suggestions to individuals regarding the appropriate testing to demonstrate the microbial damage that occurs in water-damaged homes, buildings and school.

For more information about Dr. Thrasher:

[Dr. Thrasher's website](http://drthrasher.org) (at drthrasher.org)

[Dr. Thrasher's Curriculum Vitae](#)



*Jack Thrasher, Ph.D.*

### Room to Breathe (Airtight houses in the United Kingdom)

As the U.K. house building sector moves towards making all new homes 'zero carbon' by 2016, homes are becoming more and more airtight, deliberately sealed off from outside elements to reduce energy consumption.

Airtight designs may be an effective way to reduce carbon emissions, but concern is mounting about their effect on the health of residents if the mantra 'build tight, ventilate right' is not properly observed.

According to Neil Smith of the National House Building Council, "What we expect to happen is that as we get towards 2016 and beyond, there will be a gradual transition away from natural ventilation. Rather than depending on 'trickle' ventilation [ventilation strips] in their windows, people will move towards mechanical ventilation systems."

Mr. Smith says this is significant because of problems associated with mechanical systems. 'We've seen lots of international evidence of poor design, poor installation and poor commissioning, as well as a lack of maintenance.'

[Room to Breathe \(Airtight Houses in the U.K.\)](#)



## Federal Report Offers Suggestions for Oak Ridge Elementary

The final federal report on health problems at Oak Ridge Elementary School offers several recommendations to avoid future issues. Oak Ridge was closed from June 2009 through February 2010 as the district addressed problems with mold and dampness at the school.

Employees and students had complained of illnesses since the building opened in 2005 after undergoing major renovations and additions. The complaints led the district to bring in groups to inspect the school, including a private firm and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in summer 2009.

Some of the recommendations:

- Follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedules for maintaining the HVAC system.
- Routinely monitor the school in a standardized way for possible re-occurrence of dampness.
- Walk through the entire school and check for water incursion during and after heavy rains.
- Correct the cause of any identified dampness problems and clean or remove water-damaged materials.
- Avoid routine use of biocides (which are used to clean mold).

[Federal report on Oak Ridge Elementary](#)

[News article regarding the federal report](#)



*Nick Scholten, with his daughter*

## Time Running Short for Man Needing Lung

Throughout his relatively short life, Nick Scholten has battled a variety of illnesses that would devastate the average person.

Seven years ago an abscessed tooth almost killed him. **Then about four years ago, he came in contact with a toxic mold that doctors say contributed to him losing his left lung.**

And now Scholten's right lung is giving out.

Scholten caught pneumonia after being at his job at Office Depot for only a short time and a doctor told him he couldn't return to work. Given the length of time he worked for the company, he was denied unemployment benefits. He's also not a candidate for disability benefits, he's been told, because he has worked during his previous illnesses.

[Time Running Short for Man Needing Lung](#)

See *The House that Called for Help* on page 6

## The House that Called for Help

A house that endured a leaking pipe for many months dialed 911 on Wednesday, finally bringing town officials to the rescue.

The homeowner gone — no one yet knows where — the house likely sprang a leak during a past freeze and began spraying water all over. "Water came down inside the walls and through the ceiling," said Health Director Wayne Attridge. "The (wood) floors have buckled. The ceilings are sagging. It filled the basement with (5 feet of) water."

Worse yet, potentially toxic mold is everywhere. "It's a horrific mess," said Attridge, who said the inside of the structure may have to be gutted.

The 911 call went out to police, apparently, when water short-circuited the phone system. Police recorded it as a 911 hang-up, and when they tried to return the call they got only static. Officers were sent to the location, 31 Rockaway Ave. According to the police log, they determined that something inside was leaking before they requested permission from higher-ups to make a forced entry through the back door.

It was then they saw just how badly this house had suffered.

Firefighters pumped out the basement, and all the utilities were stopped, according to fire Capt. Mike Porter.

"Right now," Building Commissioner Bob Ives said, "the house is unfit for human habitation. I don't think anyone would want to go in there because of the level of mold." Hot weather will worsen that problem, he added. And without some kind of quick remediation, "it will have to be gutted."

[The House that Called for Help](#)

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**[Next Newsletter: Friday, May 20, 2011](#)**



*Moldy house calls 911*

## New Brunswick (Canada) Courthouse Closed Due to Mould

New Brunswick Justice Minister Marie-Claude Blais says she hopes to make a decision soon on the fate of the Richibucto courthouse.

The courthouse was closed in late January after the discovery of a widespread mould problem.

Blais says staff complaints about health issues brought the matter to her department's attention.

She says it could cost millions of dollars to restore the old courthouse, but the New Brunswick government isn't certain it's worth repairing the building.

[New Brunswick Courthouse Closed Due to Mould](#)

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## Quick Links

**Website:** <http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

**Members:**  
<http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/members>

**Health Effects:**  
[http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/health\\_effects.html](http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/health_effects.html)

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**Working Together for Healthy Indoor Environments**