

# GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS"

<http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

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California Board of Equalization Building

## New \$50 Million Claim Hits California Board of Equalization Over Mold-Related Illness

A new claim has been brought against the California Board of Equalization on behalf of employees who say they've had skin rashes, respiratory problems and other illness related to mold at the BOE headquarters.

The claim, filed Wednesday with the state of California, is the newest development in a saga concerning costly structural issues plaguing the building at 450 N St. A bill pending in the state Legislature would begin a process of moving some 3,000 employees to a new headquarters, but the legislation faces concerns from the Brown administration.

A former lawsuit concerning mold-related illness involved 31 plaintiffs and was confidentially resolved in 2012. The attorney in that case, Anthony Perez, said in an interview Thursday that state officials responded to the former lawsuit by beginning an unsuccessful process to clear the building of mold.

The new claim, which Perez filed Wednesday with the state of California, alleges that **staff are still sick and that BOE management misled its employees by stating the building was mold free.**

**"People continue to show problems of mold exposure. You have management stating to employees that the building is safe, and that remediation has been successful. That is untrue," said Perez.**

Click [here](#) to read this article.

**Equalization officials are becoming more vocal in their concerns.**

**"Even though my lawyers told me not to say this, I don't think it's safe," board Chairman Jerome Horton said.**

Click [here](#) for another article on this topic.

## Asthma in Schoolchildren Is Related to Fungal Spores in Classrooms

This is an abstract from a new research paper from Taiwan.

**BACKGROUND:** The presence of visible mold in households is associated with asthma. However, the role of “classroom fungus” in the development of childhood asthma, as well as the fungal species that may lead to asthma, remains controversial. This nationwide school survey was conducted to investigate the correlation between fungal spores in classrooms and asthma in schoolchildren.

**METHODS:** From April to May 2011, a cross-sectional survey was conducted to assess allergic/asthmatic conditions in schoolchildren aged 6 to 15 years old in 44 schools across Taiwan. Personal histories and current asthmatic conditions were collected using a modified International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood questionnaire. Fungal spores in classroom were collected using a Burkard Personal Air Sampler and counted under light microscopy. Three-level hierarchical modeling was used to determine the complex correlation between fungal spores in classrooms and childhood asthma.

**RESULTS:** The survey was completed by 6,346 out of 7,154 parents (88.7%). The prevalences of physician-diagnosed asthma, current asthma, and asthma with symptoms reduced on holidays or weekends (ASROH) were 11.7%, 7.5%, and 3.1%, respectively. The geometric mean spore concentrations of total fungi, *Aspergillus*/*Penicillium*, and basidiospores were 2,181, 49, and 318 spores/m<sup>3</sup>.

*Aspergillus*/*Penicillium* and basidiospores were significantly correlated with current asthma and ASROH after adjusting for personal and school factors. Of those with current asthma, 41% reported relief of symptoms during weekends.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Classroom *Aspergillus*/*Penicillium* and basidiospores are significantly associated with childhood asthma and ASROH. Government health policy should explore environmental interventions for the elimination of fungal spores in classrooms to reduce the prevalence of childhood asthma.



*New research paper from Taiwan—Asthma in Schoolchildren is Related to Fungal Spores in Classrooms*

## Families Sick from Fracking Exposure Turn to Concerned Scientists (Pennsylvania)

Like people in other regions transformed by the shale energy boom, residents of Washington County, Pennsylvania have complained of headaches, nosebleeds and skin rashes. But because there are no comprehensive studies about the health impacts of natural gas drilling, it's hard to determine if their problems are linked to the gas wells and other production facilities that have sprung up around them.

**A group of scientists from Pennsylvania and neighboring states have stepped in to fill this gap by forming a nonprofit—apparently the first of its kind in the United States—that provides free health consultations to local families near drilling sites. Instead of waiting years or even decades for long-term studies to emerge, the Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project (SWPA-EHP) is using the best available science to help people deal with their ailments.**

"As far as unconventional natural gas drilling goes, we *are* the public health service of the United States right now," said Michael Kelly, the media liaison for the EHP.

David Brown, a toxicologist and the group's co-founder, said government agencies haven't done enough to study, analyze and mitigate the risks people face from drilling.

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

See *Hines V.A. Hospital mold problems* on page 3

## Senator Kirk Pushes for Changes at Hines V.A. Hospital

Sen. Mark Kirk, Illinois, met Friday with a White House official to call for removing upper management at Hines Veterans Affairs Hospital, which he said would create a culture of accountability for the embattled facility.

Kirk also met with Hines director Joan Ricard, whom he has repeatedly recommended be removed.

**He again called for her termination, adding “I suggested to her that she get a criminal lawyer to defend her against the upcoming FBI investigation I’m going to recommend.”**

The Illinois senator met with Deputy White House Chief of Staff Rob Nabors to address a plethora of issues at Hines, including long wait times for veterans, and even an alleged mold problem. Kirk’s staff issued photos of what they said was mold discovered in a newly renovated area of the hospital.

Kirk first met with Nabors and hospital whistleblowers, including Germaine Clarno, a Hines social worker who is local president of a union representing hospital employees. He then met with Nabors, Hines representatives, including Ricard, as well as Sen. Dick Durbin and congressional officials.

Kirk suggested the hospital take on a Navy culture: “In the Navy, Joan would have been immediately relieved of command,” Kirk said, calling her “a civil servant with an attitude.”

The meeting came after Kirk wrote a letter to Richard Griffin, acting inspector general of the Department of Veteran Affairs, to let him know of concerns he had at the hospital.

On July 21, Hines opened a new wing with nine operating rooms, which, Kirk wrote, could “jeopardize the health of our veterans due to reports of mold.”

**Kirk said in the letter that numerous whistleblowers had approached his office about the new operating room, citing consistent flooding and the presence of mold throughout the newly renovated wing.**



*Edward Hines Jr Veterans Affairs Hospital*

## Senator Kirk Pushes for Changes at Hines V.A. Hospital (continued)

Clarno said she told Nabors about the mold Friday.

“We have a serious problem of water leakage, even behind the walls and through the facade. And what’s happening is just band aids are being put on so when they see mold, they cut it out,” Clarno said.

Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin said he also met Friday with Hines management as well as representatives of veterans groups.

He wouldn’t comment specifically on Ricard, but said, **“If anyone has been guilty of lying or wrongdoing in the VA, they’ve got to go. I don’t care who they are or at what level.”**

But he added that “the overwhelming number of people working in the VA care for these vets, love the vets and the vets love them back.”

Hines issued a statement on Friday saying “the safety and well-being” of veterans is their highest concern. Hines spokeswoman Charity Hudson said the leaks were caused by heavy rains in April 2014 in “aging infrastructure” in the area designated for the new operating room prior to its opening.

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

See *Tenant Fights to Break Lease* on page 4

## Tenant Fights to Break Lease after Apartment Floods

Jennifer Arnold had no idea when she moved into her new home last month that she'd be fighting to move out within a matter of weeks.

After moving into her newly leased Walnut Hills apartment in Kentwood Arnold said she and her two young sons, Corey and Camerin are wanting to leave due to flooding.

For the three weeks they've lived there Arnold said water came into her home every time it rained.

"This has been an ongoing issue," Arnold said. "I told them the second or third day that I was here that it was flooding outside and it was going to be a problem if it wasn't taken care of. Nothing's been done."

Outside of her son's bedroom is about a two to three foot hole where a broken pipe meant to filter water away from the apartments can be seen.

"My kids can't even go outside and play because of the trip hazards and fall hazards around here," Arnold said. "I asked to get out of my lease they won't even let me out of my lease on good terms with them."

That's when Arnold contacted the FOX 17 Problem Solvers.

Unpacked items stacked from the floor to the ceiling were the centerpiece of the living room.

She walked us through her apartment to see just how bad the problem was. With each step, the sounds of water coming up through the carpet could be heard as it squished between Arnold's toes. Then, with her pant legs rolled up she pressed her foot into the floor of her bedroom, which left an imprint, showing how saturated the carpet was.

**"My carpet shouldn't be giving my feet a bath," she said.**

**While walking barefoot on drenched carpeting may be uncomfortable Arnold said her greatest concern is the health of her two sons.**



## Tenant Fights to Break Lease after Apartment Floods (continued)

"When we moved the bed this whole wall was covered in mold," Arnold said. "Within hours of being in the house Camerin's asthma started acting up and I had to give him a breathing treatment...so the kids can't even stay here."

Arnold had no choice but to send her children to their grandfather's house. She said the separation was hard on all of them.

"I just want to move out," Arnold sobbed. "I want my family together. I don't want to have to deal with this."

We took Arnold's concerns to on-site management. Unable to answer our questions as to why Arnold couldn't break her lease they gave us the number to the corporate office. That call went unanswered and unreturned. Then, 24 hours later Arnold got a call.

**"They will let me out of my lease," she said. "They didn't do anything and then all of a sudden I get Problem Solvers involved and suddenly the problem's being solved."**

FOX 17 stopped back into the office to confirm they were letting Arnold out of her lease. They didn't want to go on camera but said they would supply her with documentation upon turning in her keys.

Still, being able to move forward and move out is a long-awaited relief for Arnold, who wants just one thing. "I want my children to be able to be here in their beds every night."

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

See *Orleans Parish...lawsuit over toxic mold* on page 5



## Orleans Parish Sheriff's Deputy Files Lawsuit Over Toxic Mold

An Orleans Parish sheriff's deputy filed a lawsuit on Friday, claiming deputies and inmates have been exposed to toxic mold in the Orleans Parish Prison.

According to a news release from attorneys representing Deputy Donald L. Marshall Jr., their client was diagnosed with Type 1 Allergic Hypersensitivity, which was exacerbated by reactive airway disease due to toxic mold.

"Mr. Marshall's medical team has determined that his sensitivity to the exposure is at the highest possible levels," the release said.

Marshall's attorneys said he has worked "long hours on a daily basis at the jail and the Criminal District Courthouse while contractors were remediating both jails and the courthouse of mold and potentially other toxic substances."

Attorneys claim that the contractors wore protective gear, but no gear was provided to deputies nor was any warning given.

As a result, attorneys said, public servants are experiencing medical issues.

**According to evidence gathered by Marshall's attorneys, Sheriff Marlin Gusman was aware of the "toxic environmental conditions at his facilities for quite some time" and claim Gusman has tried to conceal the conditions.**

**"Sheriff Gusman and his senior staff routinely have visible mold painted over and bleached, which is evidenced in the consent decree monitors statements and reports of the overwhelming smell of bleach being used just prior to the monitors scheduled inspections," attorneys said.**

"It's a huge problem for their health with the mold issues and other basic sanitation problems," said Marjorie Esman, the head of the local ACLU.

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.



## Is Your Workplace Making You Ill?

Building biologist Lucinda Curran, founder of Eco Health Solutions, says although we can largely control our home environments, maintaining a healthy workplace can be trickier.

"These energy-efficient buildings are shut up so tightly that it is like spending time inside a sealed plastic bag."

Curran offers some tips.

**Get fresh air.** "If you can open the windows, do so at least once a day or head outside for breaks to get some fresh air," says Curran.

**Eliminate fragrances.** Colleagues' air fresheners, perfumes, aftershave and colognes can all reduce indoor air quality and irritate people with chemical sensitivities.

**Drink filtered water.** "A range of chemicals are used to treat tap water, which travels through pipes of various ages and distances before reaching those in the office building," she says. Best options are reverse osmosis water filters with a re-mineraliser and stainless steel or glass bottles instead of plastic.

**Limit electrical exposure.** There are two kinds of electromagnetic fields: extra low frequency — normal building wiring and small appliances, and high frequency — cordless technology and wireless internet. People with electrical hypersensitivity can suffer migraines, burning or shooting pain, rashes or twitching. Even those not hypersensitive can experience muscle tension, teeth grinding, poor sleep, agitation and headaches.

Click [here](#) to read the article.

See *\$24 Billion Jury Award...Big Tobacco* on page 6

## A \$24 Billion Jury Award Against Big Tobacco

Tobacco has been ingrained in our society since our nation's earliest days. But if cigarettes were introduced today, they'd most likely never be approved for market.

For an example of changing attitudes, just Friday, a Florida jury handed R.J. Reynolds \$23.6 billion in damages in a lawsuit filed by the widow of Michael Johnson Sr., a smoker who died at the young age of 36 from lung cancer, leaving her to raise their two children -- an award that will, of course, be appealed. So the announcement of a merger between America's second- and third-largest tobacco companies, R.J. Reynolds and Lorillard, feels like a lost episode of "Mad Men."

### **What other industry is permitted to sell a product that, if used as intended, kills half of its consumers?**

That's not only a dysfunctional public health policy; it's the worst business strategy ever. Imagine the immediate recalls if any other product killed half its customers. What if each Google search or Facebook post took a day off your life?

Of course, tobacco has an ingredient that no other consumer product has: nicotine, a substance as addictive as heroin. It's a sure-fire recipe for consumer loyalty to a deadly product, used by companies that have been determined by the federal courts to be liars and racketeers, guilty of putting profits ahead of public health.

Yet there is some positive news. Despite the nicotine manipulation and the nearly \$9 billion that Big Tobacco spends each year marketing its deadly products, smoking rates have declined dramatically over the past several decades.

**Shouldn't the tobacco industry be challenged to introduce products to the marketplace that provide consumer pleasure without the unbearable pain of lung cancer, prostate cancer, pancreatic cancer and heart disease? Unless this scenario happens, let's not kid ourselves. These companies are jockeying to meet their financial targets, satisfy their shareholders and sell as much deadly tobacco to Americans as they possibly can. Until they truly turn over a new leaf, nearly half a million American lives will continue to go up in smoke each year.**

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

**\$24 Billion  
Jury Award  
Against Big  
Tobacco**



*Ban E-Cigarettes from Indoor Workplaces*

## Ban E-Cigarettes from Indoor Workplaces (Wisconsin)

There's a lot we don't know about electronic cigarettes. There's even a lot the Food and Drug Administration doesn't know about them.

The FDA has proposed regulations that would set an age limit for buying them and require them to have a warning label about nicotine addiction. The agency also has done a study that found half of the e-cigarettes tested contained cancer-causing substances.

Here in Wisconsin, we have a ban on selling them to minors, enacted in 2012. The state also has an indoor workplace ban on tobacco cigarettes — and a question about whether it should include e-cigarettes.

Based on what we know about them — and more on what we don't know about them — the ban should be expanded to include e-cigarettes.

Billed as an alternative to tobacco cigarettes, especially for those trying to quit smoking, e-cigarettes are devices that have a battery and an atomizer. They heat liquid that's infused with nicotine and users inhale the vapors.

Just as tobacco smokers have a right to smoke, but are prohibited from doing so inside indoor workplaces because of the harmful effects to others, e-cigarette users should face the same restriction for the same reason.

Click [here](#) to read the article.

Minnesota [ban on e-cigarettes](#) went into effect on July 1.

See *Workers Exposed to Mold* on page 7

## Workers Exposed to Mold at Social Security Administration Office

**GIHN comment:** The government doesn't want to help families with mold problems and they claim that mold isn't harmful, but they moved their employees out of this moldy (Social Security) building because of the health problems.

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Not long after the Social Security Administration moved into a west Augusta office building in 2011, employees began to notice a troubling pattern of water seeping into the facility, producing an often muggy and musty work environment.

In summer 2012, the federal government examined personnel, inspected office space and ran tests at the Claussen Road complex. Within weeks, it concluded that a dozen workers had suffered chronic headaches, eye allergies and asthma symptoms from exposure to mold.

After the government initially cited a consolidated workforce for the agency's decision to move out of the offices, the agency said in an e-mail last week that Chaudhry (the building owner) is to blame for its April departure. Taxpayers are locked into paying more than \$476,000 annually in rent for an empty building that's under lease until at least 2021.

Because of health and safety concerns, and to make better use of space, personnel were moved to the Social Security office off Robert C. Daniel Jr. Parkway and other hearing locations.

Federal health officials conducted evaluations with 17 of the facility's 53 employees. Reported work-related symptoms included chronic headaches, dizziness, eye allergies, post-nasal drip, nasal allergy and asthma, and hives.

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

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**Next Newsletter: September 1, 2014**



*Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Adjudication and Review*

## Federal Housing Officials to Inspect HUD Homes (Massachusetts)

Almost two months after the state housing department released a scathing report on Quincy Housing Authority's poor maintenance practices, federal housing officials now plan to launch their own inspections of homes funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Inspections will begin in August.

The embattled housing agency has been under the state spotlight since late May, prompting the federal agency to start its own inspections.

Inspectors from the State Department of Housing and Community Development have documented what officials have described as **"deplorable" conditions** in many of the 938 state-funded public housing apartments in Quincy, including heavy mold.

Click [here](#) to read the article.

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### Quick Links:

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

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

**Position Statement:**  
[http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/files/GIHN\\_position\\_statement\\_Revised\\_12\\_17\\_2012.pdf](http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/files/GIHN_position_statement_Revised_12_17_2012.pdf)

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