

# GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS  
IN OUR HOMES, SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES



December 1, 2015

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## Service Members Say Mold is a Problem on Parris Island

According to Parris Island (South Carolina) marines and sailors, mold is growing on everything.

"It grows on your clothes and other belongings. Anything that can retain the slightest bit of moisture, pretty much grows mold. Once it's really set into your garments and things like that, and your uniforms, you have to throw them away because the dry cleaners won't take them."

The Marines and sailors say they feel betrayed because they signed up to protect their country - not to live in poor conditions. Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Dallas Nonprofit Wants City to Take Action on Apartment Living Conditions

The wine-colored carpet in Angelia Salazar's northwest Dallas apartment is covered in dark patches of mold. In the bathroom, mold clings to the ceiling and walls.

Doctors think it's hurting Salazar's two youngest children who have developed breathing problems. But Salazar's complaints--and even a note from her children's doctor--to the management of the Sierra Vista apartment complex have gone unheeded, as have residents' complaints at similar complexes in the area.

Last month, leaders of Dallas Area Interfaith and the Lumin Education Program organized a 60-person walk-through of 12 apartment complexes where they had heard complaints. Issues they documented included mold, hole-riddled walls, pests and health issues that they feared were tied to poor conditions.

**"Every household that I visited reported breathing problems that can be related to environmental factors,"** said Dr. Barry Lachman, a Dallas Area Interfaith leader from Temple Shalom who is also pediatrician and president of the Asthma Coalition of Texas. "This is a problem for all of us, because we're paying for the health effects and medical costs of the conditions we saw."

Tara Perez, a Dallas Area Interfaith organizer, said the group had submitted a list of the worst apartments it saw to the supervisor of the city's community prosecution code team, hoping to see them inspected. Next, the group would like to see city code altered to increase the frequency of mandatory apartment inspections. Perez also wants the city to more harshly penalize complexes that violate code standards.

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

See *HUD Smoke-Free Public Housing* on page 2

## HUD Announces New Rule Making Public Housing Smoke-Free

U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julián Castro joined Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy in Alexandria, VA to announce a proposed rule to make the nation's public housing properties entirely smoke-free. **HUD's proposed rule would require more than 3,100 public housing agencies (PHAs) across the country to implement smoke-free policies in their developments within 18 months of the final rule.**

Under HUD's proposed rule, PHAs must implement a policy prohibiting lit tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars or pipes) in all living units, indoor common areas, administrative offices and all outdoor areas within 25 feet of housing and administrative office buildings. HUD is seeking public comment on this proposed rule for the next 60 days.

"We have a responsibility to protect public housing residents from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, especially the elderly and children who suffer from asthma and other respiratory diseases," said HUD Secretary Julián Castro. "This proposed rule will help improve the health of more than 760,000 children and help public housing agencies save \$153 million every year in healthcare, repairs and preventable fires."

**According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cigarette smoking kills 480,000 Americans each year, making it the leading preventable cause of death in the United States.** By reducing the public health risks associated with tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke, the proposed smoke-free rule will enhance the effectiveness of HUD's efforts to provide increased public health protection for residents of public housing. The rule will impact the more than 940,000 units that are currently not smoke-free, including more than 500,000 units inhabited by elderly households.

**"Everyone – no matter where they live – deserves a chance to grow up in a healthy, smoke-free home," said U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy. "There is no safe level of secondhand smoke. So, when 58 million Americans – including 15 million children – are exposed to secondhand smoke, we have an obligation to act. That is what Secretary Castro is doing with this proposal."**



## HUD Announces New Rule Making Public Housing Smoke-Free (continued)

Since 2009, HUD strongly encouraged Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to adopt smoke-free policies in their buildings and common areas. During this time, more than 600 PHAs and tribally designated housing entities adopted smoke-free policies. Currently, there are nearly 1.2 million public housing units across the country. Through HUD's voluntary policy and local initiatives, more than 228,000 public housing units are already smoke-free. If finalized, the proposed smoke-free rule announced today would expand the impact to more 940,000 public housing units.

HUD's proposed smoke-free rule will also help reduce damage and maintenance costs associated with smoking. It is estimated that smoking causes over 100,000 fires each year, resulting in more than 500 death and close to half a billion dollars in direct property damage; additionally, smoking is the lead cause of fire related deaths in multifamily buildings. A 2014 CDC study estimated that prohibiting smoking in public housing would yield an annual cost savings of \$153 million, including \$94 million in secondhand smoke-related health care, \$43 million in renovation of smoking-permitted units, and \$16 million in smoking-related fire losses.

**This proposed rule will be open for public comment for the next 60 days.** Interested persons may submit comments electronically at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Comments may also be submitted by mail to the Regulations Divisions, Office of General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW, Room 10276, Washington, DC 20410.

Click [here](#) to read the press release. Click [here](#) to read HUD's proposed rule.

## Environmental Illness Discussed at Vatican City Conference

Patients have a right to a diagnosis that includes the possible causes of their illness, not just treatment addressing the symptoms, said a doctor invited to a Vatican-sponsored congress.

The increasing awareness of the impact that pollution and other environmental factors are having on human health should play a greater role in medical assessments and policies dealing with prevention, Dr. Antonio Pasciuto said at a Vatican news conference Nov. 17.

The Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry was about to host an international conference on a culture of "health and welcoming" in serving humanity and the planet. More than 500 people -- scientists, health care professionals, theologians, diplomats and other experts -- were expected to attend the conference Nov. 19-21.

Pasciuto, who is a member of the European Academy for Environmental Medicine and president of the Italian Association of Environmental Medicine and Health, said many illnesses and diseases are caused by exposure to toxic substances present in the air, water, food and everyday products.

**Science has found and continues to study the harmful effects of insecticides, pesticides, heavy metals, molds and a whole host of chemicals and particles people put into the environment, he said.**

"Practically all chronic pathologies and so-called functional disturbances are to be attributed, at least in large part, to such factors," he said.

**"Too often we doctors tend to blame age or stress, forgetting to study the causes and overlooking the many forms of environmental overload to which all of us, to different degrees, are exposed," Pasciuto said.**

For that reason, he said, "I believe it is fundamental to always take into account the right of people who are ill to an etiological diagnosis, that is, (a diagnosis) based on the study of the causes that determine the pathology."



*Vatican City*

## Environmental Illness Discussed at Vatican City Conference (continued)

**Looking deeper at the environmental causes of illness not only assists the doctor in finding a more effective treatment and therapy, he said, it can aid in prevention and possible solutions in order to avoid or correct environmental pollution.**

Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski, council president, said the framework of the conference is based on the theology of safeguarding life evident in Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home," St. John Paul II's "Evangelium Vitae" and Pope Benedict XVI's teachings.

"An 'ecology of the heart' and 'ecological conversion' allow us to recognize and correct those errors and that superficiality that separate us from creation, corrupting it and abusing" the universal good of creation that is meant to be handed down to future generations, he said.

Camillian Father Augusto Chendi, undersecretary of the council, said the "environmental imbalances caused by man" compel the church to proclaim more forcefully humanity's duty to safeguard creation and manage resources more carefully.

Aware of everyone's "important responsibilities and an unavoidable moral obligation" to safeguard creation, the church is calling for greater protection of people's dignity and health, he said.

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

## Federal Courthouse to be Repaired or Rebuilt (Pensacola, Florida)

**GIHN Note:** We were happy to see the news that the Federal Courthouse in Pensacola, Florida is going to be repaired or rebuilt. GIHN frequently responds to news articles about mold and indoor air quality. We responded to some of the news articles about this federal courthouse and also communicated via email with the General Services Administration (GSA).

*We want to commend Judge Casey Rodgers for taking a stand in regard to the dangerous conditions in this courthouse and her relentless efforts to ensure that her employees and courthouse patrons are safe.*

The failings of the structure date back to when it was first constructed by Philadelphia-based Keating Development under a “lease construct” agreement with the GSA. Keating Development still owns the building, which collects rent from the GSA paid by the federal court, adding up to more than \$5 million over 18 years, according to officials.

Earlier this year, more than 100 federal employees were forced to vacate the courthouse due to health concerns brought to the attention of federal officials by Chief Judge Casey Rodgers, whose chambers are in the building. Rodgers stated in a letter to GSA officials in March that more than half of all employees reported health effects suffered by the occupants, from nausea to chest pains and shortness of breath – all symptoms consistent with mold exposure.

The building’s disrepair has also forced elected officials to relocate staffs elsewhere. U.S. Senator and Republican Presidential candidate Marco Rubio said that he was forced to move his employees out of the courthouse after a pregnant woman began showing symptoms that were consistent of someone exposed to toxic mold.

Senator Bill Nelson has voiced his frustrations over the continued issues plaguing the courthouse, stating the continued problems of the courthouse have forced its workforce into a “desperate” state of need for a new facility.



## Federal Courthouse to be Repaired or Rebuilt (Pensacola, Florida)—continued

“Since the courthouse opened, it has been fraught with problems related to shoddy construction.” Nelson said. The senior senator from Florida assured the public he is taking the steps to get money appropriated to rebuild or rehab the building.

In March 2015, Rodgers sent a letter to the GSA saying the courthouse had been infested with mold for 20 years without any permanent remediation. She also said more than half of the building’s employees had reported health problems consistent with mold exposure.

The building was completed in 1997, but occupancy was delayed until spring of 1998 because of mold and water intrusion problems. Employees reported problems again in 1999, 2003, 2011, 2012 and 2014.

The lease of the building expires in July 2017 and ownership of the building is scheduled to revert back to the City of Pensacola, unless the GSA decides to take on ownership of the facility. Earlier this year, GSA stated they did not anticipate extending the term of the lease of the building. With new recommendations to repair or rebuild now being considered, that could change.

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

To read the March 23, 2015 letter from Judge Casey Rodgers' to the GSA, click [here](#).

To read more about this story, check out the [GIHN Newsletter for May 1, 2015](#).



## Contaminating Our Bodies with Everyday Products

In recent weeks, two major medical organizations have issued independent warnings about toxic chemicals in products all around us. Unregulated substances, they say, are sometimes linked to breast and prostate cancer, genital deformities, obesity, diabetes and infertility.

“Widespread exposure to toxic environmental chemicals threatens healthy human reproduction,” the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics warned in a landmark statement last month.

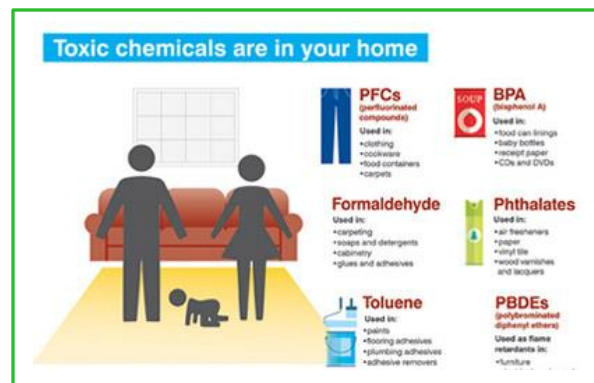
**The warnings are a reminder that the chemical industry has inherited the mantle of Big Tobacco--minimizing science and resisting regulation in ways that cause devastating harm to unsuspecting citizens.**

**In the 1950s, researchers were finding that cigarettes caused cancer, but the political system lagged in responding. Now the same thing is happening with toxic chemicals.**

The gynecology federation’s focus is on endocrine disrupters, chemicals that imitate sex hormones and often confuse the body. Endocrine disrupters are found in pesticides, plastics, shampoos and cosmetics, cash register receipts, food can linings, flame retardants and countless other products.

“Exposure to toxic chemicals during pregnancy and lactation is ubiquitous,” the organization cautioned, adding that virtually every pregnant woman in America has at least 43 different chemical contaminants in her body. It cited a National Cancer Institute report finding that “to a disturbing extent babies are born ‘pre-polluted.’”

**This warning now represents the medical mainstream. It was drafted by experts from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, the World Health Organization, Britain’s Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and similar groups.**



## Contaminating Our Bodies with Everyday Products (continued)

Such medical professionals are on the front lines. They are the ones confronting rising cases of hypospadias, a birth defect in which boys are born with a urethra opening on the side of the penis rather than at the tip. They are the ones treating women with breast cancer. Both are conditions linked to early exposure to endocrine disrupters.

The other major organization that recently issued a warning is the Endocrine Society, the international association of doctors and scientists who deal with the hormone system.

“Emerging evidence ties endocrine-disrupting chemical exposure to two of the biggest public health threats facing society — diabetes and obesity,” the Endocrine Society said in announcing its 150-page “scientific statement.” It added that “mounting evidence” also ties endocrine disrupters to infertility, prostate cancer, undescended testicles, testicular cancer, breast cancer, uterine cancer, ovarian cancer and neurological issues. Sometimes these problems apparently arise in adults because of exposures decades earlier in fetal stages.

For now, experts say the best approach is for people to try to protect themselves. Especially for women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, and for young children, try to eat organic, reduce the use of plastics, touch cash register receipts as little as possible, try to avoid flame-retardant couches and consult the consumer guides at [ewg.org](http://ewg.org).

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

## Florida Woman Says Mold in Breast Implants Almost Killed Her

More than 300,000 women get breast implants every year in the U.S. A Shalimar, Florida, woman has a warning for them.

She says her implants nearly killed her. You may have seen some of the articles popping up on Facebook and various websites, linking mold in saline implants to a host of health problems. Anne Ziegenhorn says they are frighteningly accurate.

If Ziegenhorn had known the price she'd pay for beauty, she would have run the other way.

**She said, "It's not a story a multi-billion dollar industry wants to get out."**

"I felt like that was it, I was gonna die, and the doctors were gonna let me die," Ziegenhorn said.

**It started in 2011. The woman who was a picture of health suddenly started gaining weight, losing her vision and experiencing burning, unrelenting pain. She had sores all over her body. Her thinking was so cloudy she thought she might have Alzheimer's. She was misdiagnosed with everything from lupus to arthritis to thyroid problems.**

She said, "Silicone sickness in and of itself is one entity. And then you add the mold to it that we had, and then you've got two illnesses going on."

The diagnosis that Anne believes saved her life came from Dr. Susan Kolb, author of "The Naked Truth About Breast Implants." Dr. Kolb said.

Dr. Kolb says she's seeing lots of women with mold in their saline implants, often from defective valves. She says some patients also have detoxification problems that make them particularly sensitive to the silicone shells of the implants.

She says in 25-30 percent of the population, the reactions are debilitating. For safety, women need to get their implants replaced every eight to fifteen years.

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



## Mold Causes Closing of Another Social Security Office

Mold is prompting the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) office on Commonwealth Boulevard in Martinsville, Virginia, to close for about two months.

The office will close at 1 p.m. Friday, according to a news release from the SSA.

**It will remain closed until early February while the mold is being removed**, said Gina Gilliam, public affairs and communications manager for the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Mid-Atlantic Region.

The GSA handles matters pertaining to federal government buildings.

After it recently found out about the mold, "measures were put in place to ensure the health and safety of visitors and employees," Gilliam wrote in an email. She did not elaborate on those measures.

Employees will temporarily be assigned to other social security offices, the SSA release stated.

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

Read the GIHN Newsletters for [August 1, 2014](#), [August 12, 2011](#), and [November 19, 2010](#), to learn about mold problems at other Social Security offices.

## Pesticide Sickness Prompts Response from Emergency Workers

A group of workers who were exposed to a pesticide in the Lost Hills area attracted a massive response from emergency workers, including deployment of more than a dozen Hall Ambulance vehicles and off-duty EMTs and paramedics. The emergency responders almost certainly outnumbered the 33 people who were actually treated at the scene.

But they can be excused for the apparent excess. **First reports indicated as many as 300 people could have been affected, resulting in the first use of Hall's "electronic recall system" to bring in off-duty employees.** Hall spokesman Mark Corum said the company sent "12 advanced life support paramedic ambulances, a paramedic field supervisor unit, a disaster medical supply unit and a multi-passenger bus."

In the end, only slightly more than a 10th of the initial reported number of victims were decontaminated and triaged. Two were transported to San Joaquin Community Hospital with minor injuries.

Kern County Fire Capt. Cary Wright said late Friday afternoon it remains unknown how exactly the solar farm workers became exposed to the pesticide. He said air readings taken at the scene were negative, and nearby Paramount Farms reported no pesticide spraying occurred in the area Friday.

"We never smelled anything out there," Wright said. "The air seemed safe."

**Wright said the insecticide Danitol was sprayed from the ground at a location 4 1/2 miles away, and it may have drifted to the workers' location in the 16500 block of Twisselman Road.** No aerial spraying occurred.

Calls came in at 8:08 a.m. indicating 70 people were affected, including 20 of whom reportedly suffered symptoms including vomiting and bloody noses, Wright said.

The solar farm is located among almond and pecan orchards.

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



## Christmas Tree Syndrome

More than a third of Brits (35%) suffer from an increase in hay fever-like symptoms at Christmas, according to a poll. Real trees cause most of the problems.

Dubbed 'Christmas Tree Syndrome', symptoms of this festive health complaint include itchy noses, watery eyes, wheezing, coughing, chest pains, lethargy and insomnia. It can even lead to life-threatening pneumonia.

Scientists from Upstate Medical University, part of the State University of New York, discovered the condition after they saw an increase in respiratory problems in the weeks before and after December 25.

When they analysed pine needles and bark from 28 Christmas trees, they found 53 cases of mould, which releases spores that can trigger allergic reactions.

While the mould is naturally occurring, bringing the tree inside creates the perfect conditions for it to grow.

Another study found that after two weeks of a tree being on display, the number of airborne mould spores increased from 800 per 35 cubic feet to 5,000.

But artificial trees can also trigger the sneezes, warns allergens expert Max Wiseberg: "If you have stored your tree since last year, it will have accumulated a layer of dust which will be dispersed when it is disturbed."

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

See *Poor Indoor Air...cognitive function* on page 8

## Poor Indoor Air Quality Affects Cognitive Function (Harvard study)

Do you ever get that feeling at work where you can't think straight, or you feel drowsy and uninspired? Most people tend to blame their job for arousing this kind of fuzzy-headedness – and yep, that could be part of the problem! – but a new study reveals another likely culprit: the stale air in your poorly ventilated workspace.

Researchers led by Harvard University have found that people working in well-ventilated office spaces with below-average levels of indoor pollutants and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) demonstrate significantly higher cognitive functioning scores than workers in offices with typical levels of pollutants and CO<sub>2</sub>.

**“We spend 90 percent of our time indoors and 90 percent of the cost of a building are the occupants, yet indoor environmental quality and its impact on health and productivity are often an afterthought,”** said Joseph Allen, assistant professor of exposure assessment science at the Harvard Centre for Health and the Global Environment.

**“These results suggest that even modest improvements to indoor environmental quality may have a profound impact on the decision-making performance of workers.”**

According to the researchers, ever since the 1980s office buildings have increasingly become more energy-efficient, but this trend has also meant they've become more airtight and insulated from the outdoor environment, increasing the risks of poor indoor air quality.

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

Click [here](#) to read the abstract and the full report.



## Asthma Study Finds High Concentrations of Chemicals in Louisville Homes

A University of Louisville study on asthma in older adults has found high levels of potentially dangerous chemicals inside the homes of participants in the city and Southern Indiana.

Chemicals like chloroform, benzene, xylene, toluene, chloromethane, and Freon 22, 11 and 12 were found in almost all of the homes analyzed. Many were in concentrations above safety thresholds.

Researchers are looking to find what triggers asthma in Louisville residents who are 60 years and older, have asthma and are non-smokers.

Lead researcher and U of L nursing professor Barbara Polivka told a Metro Council committee on Wednesday that the study includes both clinical assessments and air quality monitoring.

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

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### Quick Links:

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

**Health Effects:**  
<http://www.globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/health-effects>

**Position Statement:**  
<http://www.globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/GIHN-position-statement>

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**Next Newsletter: January 1, 2016**