



World Health Organization Report Focuses on IAQ and Ventilation Systems

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently published a report discussing the adverse health effects that occur when dampness and mold contaminate indoor air quality.

Patrick O'Donnell, of Enviro Team Group in Pompano Beach, Florida, said the WHO document reports what the NADCA community has suspected for years. HVAC system components "are significant and play a major role in the perceived indoor air quality." O'Donnell noted that the WHO report links the dirtiness of heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems with an increase of multiple respiratory symptoms and specifically mentions "dirty ductwork, dirty filters and dirty air intakes" as pollutant sources.

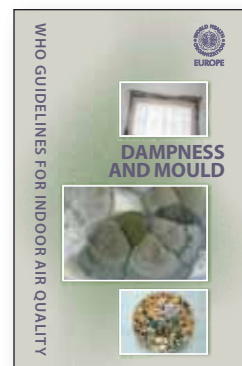
Unlike previous studies that expressed concerns and suggested possible health issues, the WHO document cites that, "There is sufficient epidemiological evidence of associations between dampness or mold and asthma development, asthma exacerbation, current asthma, respiratory infections (except otitis media), upper respiratory tract symptoms, cough, wheeze and dyspnoea."

The document, "WHO Guidelines for Indoor Air Quality: Dampness and Mold," was produced by an international community of public health authorities. These professionals reviewed substantial scientific evidence of health problems, and were able to link them to moldy and damp indoor environments.

The WHO document draws several conclusions that are related to the HVAC Inspection, Maintenance and Restoration Industry, including the following:

- Evidence from sufficient research shows that occupants of moldy buildings are at increased risk for developing respiratory symptoms, infections and asthma. Results show that remediation of dampness and mold can reduce adverse health outcomes.
- Clinical evidence shows that certain microbials related to dampness may increase the risks of rare health conditions.
- Common indoor dust and dirt provide sufficient nutrients to support extensive microbial growth.
- Persistent dampness and microbial growth on interior surfaces and in building structures should be avoided or minimized, as they may lead to adverse health effects.
- Remediation of the conditions that lead to adverse exposure should be given priority to prevent an additional contribution to poor health in populations who are already living with an increased burden of disease.

NADCA members were largely aware that consumer demand for HVAC cleaning services had been questioned by some industry professionals because there was not enough accepted scientific data linking health effects to occupants. The WHO report puts a lot of these questions to rest, said O'Donnell. ●



To read a PDF version of the full report, please visit the following Web site: <http://www.euro.who.int/document/E92645.pdf>