

## Indoor Air Quality Position Statement

**Goal:** The air we breathe will not cause or worsen lung disease.

**Position:** The American Lung Association of New England supports an approach towards continual improvement of indoor air quality that focuses on pollution prevention, while ensuring adequate ventilation. Air cleaning may need to be considered, as long as the air cleaning methods have proven effectiveness and do not introduce harmful amounts of pollutants into the indoor environment. (see definitions)

The American Lung Association of New England supports strategies that:

- Consider the available knowledge base; where the knowledge base is inadequate, we should err on the side of caution, and promote research proposals that address these knowledge gaps;
- Consider the comparative risks and benefits of alternative measures to improve indoor air quality;
- Consider a comprehensive set of intervention tools, which would include 1) increasing the knowledge base (monitoring/research), 2) education and communications, 3) policy development, 4) community building and mobilization, 5) enforcement, and 6) litigation when necessary.

Position statements adopted by the Maine Indoor Air Quality Council (an organizational partner of the American Lung Association of Maine) will be considered for adoption by the American Lung Association of New England.

### Rationale:

Studies from the United States and Europe show that persons in industrialized nations spend more than 90 percent of their time indoors.<sup>1</sup> For infants, the elderly, people with chronic diseases, and most people who live in urban areas, the percentage is probably higher. In some cases, the concentrations of many pollutants indoors is even higher than outdoors. The lung is the most common site of injury by airborne pollutants. Our goal is to assure excellent air quality in all indoor environments, but some locations are cause for special concern. School buildings, for example, are a unique indoor environment. They are the only location where young children are required by law to be present and breathe the air. Therefore, it can be argued that we have a responsibility to assure excellent air quality in these buildings.

Some of the more common indoor air pollutants of concern are:

- Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS)
- Carbon Monoxide (CO)
- Molds (including mycotoxins and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) )
- Bio-aerosols
- Particulates
- Dust Mites
- Animal Dander
- Fragrances
- Volatile Organic and Non-organic Compounds (e.g., formaldehyde, pesticides, solvents, cleaning agents)
- Heavy Metals (e.g.airborne lead & mercury vapor)
- Asbestos & Radon

## Definitions

**Level One – source control (pollution prevention)** The source(s) of pollution are eliminated (such as banning indoor smoking), substitution of non-polluting or less polluting alternatives occurs or other methods to reduce the contamination are implemented. Seasonal variations should be taken into account.

**Level Two – local exhaust and proper ventilation amounts** to quickly remove the pollutants from the immediate environment and/or dilute them to non-irritating levels.

**Level Three -- air cleaning** At this level, mechanical processes are implemented to remove pollutants to the greatest extent possible.

*Adopted 10-25-07*

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Air and Radiation. Report to Congress on Indoor Air Quality, Volume II: Assessment and Control of Indoor Air Pollution, pp. I, 4-14. EPA-400-I-89-01C, 1989.