

OFFICE BUGS: CONTAMINANTS IN INDOOR AIR

The following diagram shows various forms of indoor air pollution in offices and explains the health effects that can result from exposure to pollutants.

Asbestos

Source: Deteriorating insulation

Effect: No immediate symptoms; chest and abdominal cancer over long-term

Fungi, molds, mites, pollen, spores, mildew

Source: Wet walls, ceilings and carpets; poorly maintained air conditioners, vents

Effect: Eye, nose, and throat irritation; asthma; fever; dizziness; lethargy; digestive problems

Nitrogen dioxide

Source: Tobacco smoke, unvented heaters

Effect: Eye, nose and throat irritation, impaired lung function

Carbon monoxide

Source: Tobacco smoke, auto exhaust, unvented heaters

Effect: Chest pain; impaired vision; confusion; nausea; headaches; death in high concentration

Formaldehyde

Source: Pressed wood products; foam insulation; glue; carpets; furniture; tobacco smoke

Effect: Eye, nose and throat irritation; coughing; fatigue; skin rash; cancer

Ozone

Source: Leaky photocopying machines

Effect: Breathing problems, headaches

Radon

Source: Naturally occurring radioactivity in earth beneath a building

Effect: No immediate symptoms; lung cancer

Organic gases

Source: Paint; solvents; aerosol sprays; cleaners and disinfectants

Effect: Damage to liver, kidney, central nervous system, nausea

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CLEARING THE AIR