Our Commitment

University of St. Thomas is committed to providing students, faculty, and staff, with a work environment free of recognized hazards. Reports of poor indoor air quality (IAQ) are investigated by Facilities Management on a case-by-case basis. Departments within Facilities Management work together to address indoor air quality concerns across the campus. The university's building automation system monitors buildings HVAC systems to ensure general comfort levels as well as adequate fresh air exchanges per the CDC and ASHRAE ventilation guidelines.

OSHA Standards

Indoor air quality (also called "indoor environmental quality") per OSHA describes how inside air can affect a person's health, comfort, and ability to work. It can include temperature, humidity, lack of outside air (poor ventilation), mold from water damage, or exposure to other chemicals. Currently, OSHA has no indoor air quality (IAQ) standards but it does provide guidelines about the most common IAQ workplace complaints.

Potential Concern Areas

Due to variations in individual sensitivities and scientific limitations, the source of IAQ complaints and respective remediation measures may not always be identified when complaints are reported and investigated. Four factors that influence IAQ are occupants, HVAC systems, possible pollutant pathways, and possible contaminant sources. Concerns over IAQ may be a result of mold and water damaged building materials, temperature and humidity issues, dust and airborne particulates, radon, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, higher than normal ppm count of volatile organic compounds, formaldehyde, hydrogen sulfide (sewer gas), nitrogen dioxide, ozone and odors.

Members of the University of St. Thomas campus community should report to Facilities Management any issues or conditions that can contribute to mold growth, such as water impacted building materials. If an employee is concerned about the quality of their indoor environment, they should first bring their concern to their department manager or Dean's office, who should contact Facilities Management. An investigation will be performed for signs of building contaminants, potential problems with building ventilation systems, or active leaks that may need to be addressed. After all trouble shooting efforts have been exhausted, Facilities Management may determine that an industrial hygienist may need to test the area for airborne contaminants. In that case, the Director of Environmental Services will contract with an industrial hygienist to perform testing. The test results will be shared with the department manager or Dean, along with any remediation plans, should they be required.

Unfortunately, there are limitations to conducting IAQ investigations. Individual sensitivities may cause occupants to experience discomfort at contaminant levels far below standards for occupational exposure. Also, mold sampling is limited due to a lack of regulatory standards (affected by individual sensitivities) and mold spores can be found in virtually all environments. More complex issues related to the building's mechanical system may require professional engineering services and/or outside contractor services. Occupants of the building will receive timely updated status reports from Facilities Management throughout the investigation and remediation process.