

# Workplace Safety Group

## March 2009

# Monthly News e-Letter

## WHY IS INDOOR AIR QUALITY (IAQ) A HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERN?

New construction specifications, that meet energy conservation guidelines, have led to airtight buildings that affect IAQ. Ventilation systems regulate the amount of fresh air entering and circulating in a building which may allow build-up of air contaminants when not properly removed. People spend a great deal of time indoors. Symptoms such as headaches, shortness of breath, coughing or nausea may result from extended indoor activity. As with other occupational health and safety issues, discuss concerns with the health and safety representative, health and safety committee, supervisor, safety co-ordinator, industrial hygienist or any other member of your company responsible for health and safety.



### A Letter to My Boss

At this moment I am putting my job at risk; please hear me out!

What it comes down to is this; you hired me to make you look good. It isn't about my job description, how well I perform the job, or the money I get for doing it. It is about making money for the company and ultimately, you! So let's put this behind us and talk about your leadership and how it is going to encourage me to do my best for you, willingly and safely.

I have friends that say "if it weren't for my boss..., if my boss would only..." I hear lots of reasons why bosses actually get in the way of successful health and safety program development. If I believed that leadership comes only from the top down (the boss), that would prevent me from leading up and taking ownership of health and safety issues that affect me and my co-workers.

If I have to constantly battle you (my boss) to achieve a higher level of workplace safety it becomes a losing proposition. There is a better way for you to facilitate acceptance of improved health and safety in our company:

- ⇒ Encourage, then allow your workers to be part of the safety process development
- ⇒ Say less, listen better and learn, we are the front line workers
- ⇒ We will always keep you informed of what we are working on
- ⇒ Believe that we are up to the challenge, after all, it's our lives on the line
- ⇒ Believe that our decisions and actions are for the greatest good
- ⇒ Help us to help ourselves; it will make the company better
- ⇒ Trust that we will do what is best for all concerned-when you show that trust we will not disappoint

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**'Smart Alec'**  
**says.....**

- ⇒ The Internal Responsibility System (IRS) puts equal accountability on owners, managers/supervisors and workers
- ⇒ Each party has specific responsibilities; employers, supervisors/managers & workers
- ⇒ The Occupational Health & Safety Act & its' Regulations protect workers' rights
- ⇒ Employers must take every precaution reasonable to protect workers
- ⇒ Supervisors/ Managers must ensure workers are never in danger
- ⇒ Workers have the right to know about workplace hazards, to participate & make recommendations about H&S improvements and to refuse work they believe is dangerous or unhealthy

Piled up trash and debris becomes one large, hazardous obstacle course. Most injuries are the result of workers tripping over materials lying around the worksite. Telling workers to be more careful and reminding them to keep work areas clean, are not enough, especially when materials are delivered to job sites far from safety warnings. Imagine how difficult it would be to manoeuvre around such a site to dodge materials. How would you find your tools and supplies if they were covered by debris from other workers?

**A worksite with poor housekeeping is not productive nor is it a safe working environment!**

This letter is a plea to you, made because I have confidence in your leadership, knowing that you will treat me with respect and dignity. I believe in the company and its' future because you recognize, that by providing an engaging and safe workplace, you are being socially responsible. Most importantly, by allowing me to take a leadership role in health and safety issues, the organization and its' people, those making you money, are safer.

Sincerely,  
Joe Worker

P.S. Thank you for listening. Knowing that you respect my opinions and allow me to voice my concerns affirms confidence that you care about the safety of my co-workers and me.

May your blessings outnumber  
The shamrocks that grow,  
And may trouble avoid you  
Wherever you go.



*Questions, Concerns, Comments?*  
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