

Terminology Services - Vocabulary Catalog List Detail Report

Term
Abrasion
Definition: The wearing away of a solid surface by friction.
Abrasive Cleaners
Definition: Products that clean through abrasive or scouring action.
Absorption
Definition: The process of one substance entering into the inner structure of another.
Acceptable Indoor Air Quality
Definition: Air in which there are no known contaminants at harmful concentrations as determined by cognizant authorities and with which a substantial majority (80% or more) of the people exposed do not express dissatisfaction.
Activated Charcoal
Definition: A highly absorbent form of carbon used to remove odors and toxic substances from liquids or gases.
Acute Exposure
Definition: A single exposure to a toxic substance which results in biological harm or death; usually characterized as lasting no longer than a day.
Acute Toxicity

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Term
<p>Definition: The ability of a substance to cause poisonous effects resulting in severe biological harm or death soon after a single exposure or dose. Any severe poisonous effect resulting from a short-term exposure.</p>
<p>Adhesion</p>
<p>Definition: Molecular attraction that holds the surfaces of two substances in contact.</p>
<p>Adsorption</p>
<p>Definition: The adhesion of a thin film of liquid or gases to the surface of a solid substance.</p>
<p>Adverse Health Effect (occurrence)</p>
<p>Definition: Any abnormal, harmful, or undesirable effect (occurrence) on the physical, biochemical, biological, or behavioral well-being of a person that results from being exposed to pollutants in the environment.</p>
<p>Aerosol</p>
<p>Definition: A suspended liquid or solid particle in a gaseous medium.</p>
<p>Air</p>
<p>Definition: A mixture of gasses constituting a compressed fluid tied to the planet by gravitational attraction. Air is 79.0% nitrogen, 20.9% oxygen, and less than 0.1% a mixture of carbon dioxide, argon, helium, and hundreds of other gasses originating from natural and man-made sources.</p>

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Term
<p>Air Changes per Hour</p> <p>Definition: Volume of air moved in one hour. One air change per hour in a room, home, or building means that all the air in that environment will be replaced in one hour.</p> <p>Acronym: ACH</p>
<p>Air Cleaning</p> <p>Definition: An IAQ control strategy to remove various airborne particulates and/or gases from the air. The three types of air cleaning most commonly used are particulate filtration, electrostatic precipitation, and gas sorption.</p>
<p>Air Cleaning System</p> <p>Definition: A device or combination of devices applied to reduce the concentration of airborne contaminants, such as microorganisms, dusts, fumes, respirable particles, other particulate matter, gases, and/or vapors in air.</p>
<p>Air-Conditioning</p> <p>Definition: The process of treating air to meet the requirements of a conditioned space by controlling its temperature, humidity, cleanliness, and distribution.</p>
<p>Air Exchange Rate</p> <p>Definition: Used in two ways: 1) the number of times that the outdoor air replaces the volume of air in a building per unit time, typically expressed as air changes per hour; 2) the number of times that the ventilation system replaces the air within a room or area within the building.</p>

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<p>Air Handling Unit</p> <p>Definition 1: For purposes of this program refers to equipment that includes a blower or fan, heating and/or cooling coils, and related equipment such as controls, condensate drain pans, and air filters. Does not include ductwork, registers or grilles, or boilers and chillers. Definition 2: A component of an HVAC system that includes the fan(s), filters, and coils to condition the air.</p> <p>Acronym: AHU</p>
<p>Air Pollutant</p> <p>Definition: Any unwanted substance in air.</p>
<p>Algae</p> <p>Definition: Simple rootless plants that grow in sunlit waters in proportion to how many nutrients are available.</p>
<p>Allergen</p> <p>Definition: A chemical or biological substance (e.g., pollen, animal dander, or house dust mite proteins) that induces an allergic state or reaction, characterized by hypersensitivity. A substance that induces allergic reaction.</p>
<p>American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists</p> <p>Acronym: ACGIH</p>
<p>American Institute of Architects</p>

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Term
Acronym: AIA
American National Standard Institute
Acronym: ANSI
American Society for Testing and Materials
Acronym: ASTM
American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers
Acronym: ASHRAE
Annoyance
Definition: A general feeling of displeasure or adverse psychological reaction toward a source. Associated with disturbance, distress and frustration.
Antimicrobial
Definition: Agent that kills microbial growth. See "disinfectant," "sanitizer," and "sterilizer."

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Asbestos
Definition: A naturally-occurring mineral fiber that can cause cancer. See www.epa.gov/asbestos
Asthma
Definition: A condition marked by recurrent attacks of difficult or labored breathing and wheezing resulting from spasmodic contraction and hypersecretion of the bronchi. It is caused by exposure to allergens such as drugs, foods, environmental pollutants, or intrinsic factors. See www.epa.gov/asthma
Atmosphere
Definition: A standard unit of pressure exerted by a 29.92-inch column of mercury at sea level and equal to 1000 grams per square centimeter.
Bacteria
Definition: Microscopic living organism.
Baghouse Filter
Definition: A large fabric bag used to eliminate intermediate and large particles. It operates like a vacuum cleaner bag, allowing air and smaller particles to pass through it, while entrapping larger particles.
Biocide

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Definition: Any poison that kills a living organism.
Biodegradability
Definition: The ability of an organic material to break down or change into a natural substance such as water or carbon dioxide.
Biodegradable
Definition: Able to break down or decompose rapidly under natural conditions.
Biological Contaminants
Definition: Agents derived from or that are living organisms (e.g., viruses, bacteria, fungi, and mammal and bird antigens) that can be inhaled and can cause many types of health effects including allergic reactions, respiratory disorders, hypersensitivity diseases, and infectious diseases. Also referred to as "microbiologicals" or "microbials."
Bioremediation
Definition: The management of microorganisms.
Breathing Zone
Definition: Area of a room in which occupants breathe as they stand, sit, or lie down.
Buffer Action
Definition: A substance's resistance to a change in pH.

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Building Air Quality
Acronym: BAQ
Building Envelope
Definition: Elements of the building, including all external building materials, windows, and walls, that enclose the internal space.
Building Officials and Code Administrators
Acronym: BOCA
Building Owners Management Association
Acronym: BOMA
Building-Related Illness
Definition: Diagnosable illness whose symptoms can be identified and whose cause can be directly attributed to airborne building pollutants (e.g., Legionnaire's disease, hypersensitivity pneumonitis).
Acronym: BRI
Carbon Dioxide

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Term
Definition: A colorless, odorless, nonpoisonous gas which results from fuel combustion and human activity indoors. Elevated levels of CO indicate ineffective ventilation indoors. Acronym: CO
Carbon Monoxide
Definition: A colorless, odorless, poisonous gas which results from incomplete combustion. Acronym: CO
Carcinogen
Definition: A substance that can cause or contribute to cancer.
Caustic
Definition: Able to burn, corrode, dissolve, or eat away other substances.
Caustic Soda
Definition: Sodium hydroxide, a strong alkaline substance used as the cleaning agent in some detergents.
Ceiling Plenum
Definition: Space below the flooring and above the suspended ceiling that accommodates the mechanical and electrical equipment and that is used as part of the air distribution system. The space is kept under negative pressure.
Central Air Handling Unit

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Definition: For purposes here, this is the same as an AHU, but serves more than one area. Acronym: Central AHU
Chemical Cleaning
Definition: Cleaning by using a chemical instead of mechanical or abrasive cleaning.
Chemical Disinfection
Definition: Disinfection by using chemicals instead of heat and other physical, electrical, or radioactive methods.
Chemical Mixture
Definition: Any combination of two or more substances.
Chemisorb
Definition: To take up and hold, usually irreversibly, by chemical forces.
Chlorinated Solvents
Definition: Organic solvents containing chlorine atoms. Examples include methylene chloride, perchloroethylene and 1,1,1 trichloroethylene used as cleaning agents.
Chronic Exposure

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Definition: Long-term exposure lasting several weeks to a lifetime.
Chronic Toxicity
Definition: The ability of a substance to cause long-term poisonous human health effects.
Cinogenic
Definition: Able to induce a cancer response at the cellular level.
Cleaning
Definition: The process of removing unwanted substances and putting them in their proper place.
Coagulation
Definition: A joining together of particles that settle out in waste water. Lime, alum, and iron salts induce the clumping of particles.
Combustion
Definition: Burning or rapid oxidation accompanied by a release of energy.
Commissioning
Definition: Start-up of a building that includes testing and adjusting HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and other systems to assure proper functioning and adherence to design criteria. Commissioning also includes the instruction of building representatives in the use of the building systems.

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Concentration
Definition: The quantity of one constituent dispersed in a defined amount of another.
Conditioned Air
Definition: Air that has been heated, cooled, humidified, or dehumidified to maintain an interior space within the "comfort zone." (Sometimes referred to as "tempered" air.)
Constant Air Volume System
Definition: Air handling system that provides a constant air flow while varying the temperature to meet heating and cooling needs. Acronym: CAV
Contaminant
Definition: Any physical, chemical, biological, or radioactive substance that can adversely affect air, water or soil.
Corrosion
Definition: Action or effect of eating away gradually. This can occur through oxidation, the action of strong acids, or caustic alkali.
Corrosive
Definition: A chemical agent that reacts with a surface, causing it to deteriorate or wear away.
Crawl Space

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Term
<p>Definition: The area beneath floors that provides access to utilities and other services. Other options are basements and slabs on grade.</p>
<p>Cubic Feet per Minute</p> <p>Definition 1: The amount of air, in cubic feet, that flows through a given space in one minute. Definition 2: A measure of the volume of a substance flowing through air within a fixed period of time. Indoors, it is the amount of air measured in cubic feet that is delivered and exchanged in one minute.</p> <p>Acronym: CFM</p>
<p>Dampers</p> <p>Definition: Controls that vary airflow through an air outlet, inlet, or duct. A damper position may be immovable, manually adjustable, or part of an automated control system.</p>
<p>Decibel</p> <p>Definition: A unit of sound measurement. Sound doubles in loudness for every 10 decibels.</p> <p>Acronym: DB</p>
<p>Decomposition</p> <p>Definition: The breakdown of matter by bacteria and fungi.</p>
<p>Degreaser</p>

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Definition: A chemical such as soap, solvents, alkali, or detergent that dissolves and helps remove greases and oils.
Depressurization
Definition: A condition that occurs when air pressure inside a structure is lower than air pressure outside.
Desiccant
Definition: A chemical agent that absorbs moisture.
Detergent
Definition 1: Synthetic washing agent that helps remove dirt and oil. Some contain compounds that kill bacteria or encourage algae growth. Definition 2: A chemical composition that cleans.
Diffusers and Grilles
Definition: Components of the ventilation system that distribute and diffuse air to promote air circulation in the occupied space. Diffusers supply air and grilles return air.
Digestion
Definition: The biochemical decomposition of organic matter, resulting in partial gasification, liquefaction, and mineralization of pollutants.
Dilution

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Term
Definition: A concentration made less concentrated by adding gas or liquid.
Dilution Ventilation
Definition: Dilution of contaminated air with uncontaminated air in a general area, room, or building for the purpose of health hazard or nuisance control.
Direct Digital Control
Acronym: DDC
Disinfectants
Definition: One of three groups of antimicrobials registered by EPA for public health uses. EPA considers an antimicrobial to be a disinfectant when it destroys or irreversibly inactivates infectious or other undesirable organisms, but not necessarily their spores. EPA registers three types of disinfectant products based upon submitted efficacy data: limited, general or broad spectrum, and hospital disinfectant.
Disinfection
Definition: A chemical or physical process that kills pathogenic organisms.
Disposal
Definition: Final placement or destruction of wastes.

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Dissolved Solids
Definition: Disintegrated organic or inorganic material contained in water.
Distribution Apportionment
Definition: The relationship between the proportion of the outside air (OA) quantity being delivered to portion a building and the proportion of the people in the building that are actually located in that portion of the building. Acronym: DA
Distribution Integrity
Definition: The relationship between the outside air (OA) quantity entering the HVAC equipment and the OA that actually gets delivered to the building occupants. Acronym: DI
Dose
Definition: The amount of exposure undergone at one time.
Dust
Definition: An air suspension of particles (aerosol) of any solid material, usually with particle size less than 100 micrometers.
Ecology

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Term
Definition: The relationship of living things to one another and their environment.
Ecosystem
Definition: The interacting system of a biological community and its environmental surroundings.
Effective Ventilation Rate
Definition: The ventilation rate based on the actual quantity of outdoor air delivered to the occupied areas of a building or space. Acronym: EVR
Electrostatic Precipitator
Definition: An air-pollution control device that removes particles from an air stream. The ESP imparts an electrical charge to particles causing them to adhere to metal plates inside the precipitator. Acronym: ESP
Emission
Definition: Pollution discharge from a source.
Emulsion
Definition: Two or more liquids that do not dissolve in each other but are held in suspension, one in the other.
Energy Recovery Ventilation System

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Definition: A device or combination of devices applied to provide the outdoor air for ventilation in which energy is transferred between the intake and exhaust airstreams.
Environment
Definition: The sum of all external conditions affecting the life of an organism.
Environmental Factors
Definition: Conditions other than indoor air contaminants that cause stress, comfort, and/or health problems (e.g., humidity extremes, drafts, lack of air circulation, noise, and over-crowding).
Environmental Tobacco Smoke
Definition: Also known as secondhand smoke, see www.epa.gov/smokefree
Acronym: ETS
Epidemic
Definition: Widespread outbreak of a disease.
Ergonomics
Definition: The study of people adjusting to their work environment; the science of adapting working conditions to the worker.
Etiology

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Term
Definition: The science of causes or origins; the cause of a specific disease.
Exfiltration
Definition: Air leakage outward through cracks and interstices and through ceilings, floors, and walls of a space or building.
Exhaust Air
Definition: Air removed from a space and not used therein.
Exhaust Ventilation
Definition: Mechanical removal of air from a portion of a building (e.g., piece of equipment, room, or general area).
Exposure
Definition: An event in which an organism comes in contact with a chemical or biological agent.
Exposure Assessment
Definition: Measurement or estimation of the magnitude, frequency, duration, and route of exposure of humans, animals, materials, or ecological components to substances in the environment. The assessment also describes the size and nature of the exposed population.
Fabric Filter
Definition: A cloth that catches dust particles.

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Fatigue
Definition: Physical or mental exhaustion; weariness; tiredness.
Flash Point
Definition: The lowest temperature at which a combustible liquid or gas gives off a flammable vapor that will burn when exposed to an open flame.
Flow Hood
Definition: Device that easily measures airflow quantity, typically up to 2,500 cfm.
Flue Gas
Definition: The air coming out of a chimney after combustion in the burner it is venting.
Fogging
Definition: Applying a liquid chemical by rapidly heating it to form fine droplets that resemble smoke or fog.
Fumes
Definition: Airborne particles, usually less than 1 micrometer in size, formed by condensation of vapors, sublimation, distillation, calcination or chemical reaction.
Fumigant

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Term
<p>Definition: A biocide that is vaporized to kill pests. Used indoors or outdoors.</p>
<p>Fungi</p> <p>Definition: A group of organisms that lack chlorophyll, including molds, mildews, yeasts, mushrooms. They receive their nutrition from decomposing organic matter. Some cause disease in humans.</p>
<p>Fungicide</p> <p>Definition: Biocides used to control, prevent, or kill fungi. See also www.epa.gov/mold</p>
<p>Gas</p> <p>Definition: A state of matter in which substances exist in the form of non-aggregated molecules, and which, within acceptable limits of accuracy, satisfies the ideal gas laws; usually a highly superheated vapor.</p>
<p>Gas Sorption</p> <p>Definition: Devices used to reduce levels of airborne gaseous compounds by passing the air through materials that extract the gases. The performance of solid sorbents is dependent on the airflow rate, concentration of the pollutants, presence of other gases or vapors, and other factors.</p>
<p>Habitat</p> <p>Definition: The place where a population lives, including its living and non living surroundings.</p>

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Hard Water
Definition: Alkaline water containing dissolved salts that interfere with some industrial processes and prevent soap from lathering.
Hazard
Definition: Risk, peril, jeopardy to which an individual is subjected.
Hazardous Waste
Definition: By-products of society that can pose a substantial or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly managed. They have at least one of four characteristics -- they are ignitable, corrosive, reactive, or toxic.
Heating, Ventilation, and Air-Conditioning system
Acronym: HVAC
Heavy Metals
Definition: Metallic elements with high atomic weights such as mercury, chromium, cadmium, arsenic, and lead. They can damage living organisms at low concentrations.
Hedonic Tone
Definition: The degree to which an odor is perceived as pleasant or unpleasant. Expressed in terms of preference by phrases such as

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"dislike very much" or "like slightly" or by facial expressions such as smiling or frowning.
High Efficiency Particulate Arrestance (filters)
Acronym: HEPA
Humidity
Definition: The measure of moisture in the atmosphere.
Hydrocarbons
Definition: Chemical compounds made up entirely of carbon and hydrogen.
Acronym: HC
Hypersensitivity
Definition: The immune system's exaggerated response to an allergen.
Hypersensitivity Diseases
Definition: Diseases characterized by allergic responses to animal antigens. The hypersensitivity diseases most clearly associated with indoor air quality are asthma, rhinitis, and hypersensitivity pneumonitis. Hypersensitivity pneumonitis is a rare but serious disease that involves progressive lung damage as long as there is exposure to the causative agent.
IAQ Coordinator

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Term
<p>Definition: An individual at the school and/or school district level who provides leadership and coordination of IAQ activities. See EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools Program at www.epa.gov/iaq/schools</p>
<p>IAQ Management Plan</p>
<p>Definition: A set of flexible and specific steps for preventing and resolving IAQ problems.</p>
<p>Ignitable</p>
<p>Definition: Capable of burning or causing a fire.</p>
<p>Immune System</p>
<p>Definition: All internal structures and processes providing defense against disease-causing organisms such as viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites.</p>
<p>Indicator Compounds</p>
<p>Definition: Chemical compounds, such as carbon dioxide, whose presence at certain concentrations may be used to estimate certain building conditions (e.g., airflow, presence of sources).</p>
<p>Individual Risk</p>
<p>Definition: The increased risk for a person exposed to a specific concentration of a toxicant.</p>
<p>Indoor Air</p>

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Definition: The air that people breathe inside a built environment.
Indoor Air Pollutant
Definition: Particles of dust, fibers, mists, bioaerosols, and gases or vapors.
Indoor Air Pollution
Definition: Also Indoor airPLUS, see www.epa.gov/indoorairplus/index.html
Acronym: IAP
Indoor Air Quality
Acronym: IAQ
Indoor Climate
Definition: Temperature, humidity, noise, and lighting inside a structure.
Infiltration
Definition: Air leakage inward through cracks and interstices and through ceilings, floors, and walls of a space or building.
Inflammation

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Term
<p>Definition: A protective tissue response to injury that destroys, dilutes, or walls off both the injurious agent and the injured tissue, characterized by symptoms such as pain, heat, redness, swelling, and loss of function.</p>
Inhalable
<p>Definition: Particles small enough to be inhaled, but large enough so that they are not quickly exhaled.</p>
Integrated Pest Management
<p>Acronym: IPM</p>
Lethal Concentration
<p>Definition: The concentration of a substance needed to kill half of a population at a specific time of observation.</p> <p>Acronym: LC50</p>
Lethargy
<p>Definition: A condition of abnormal drowsiness or torpor; a great lack of energy; apathy.</p>
Lipid Solubility
<p>Definition: The maximum concentration of a chemical that will dissolve in fatty substances. Lipid-soluble substances do not dissolve in water.</p>
Liquefaction

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Definition: Changing a solid into a liquid.
Maintenance
Definition: Care and upkeep of the surrounding environment.
Make-Up Air
Definition: Air brought into a building from outdoors through the ventilation system and that has not been previously circulated through the system.
Makeup Air
Definition: Outdoor air supplied to replace exhaust air and exfiltration.
Malaise
Definition: A vague feeling of discomfort or uneasiness.
Masking
Definition: The phenomenon where a quality in a mixture obscures one or more other qualities in it.
Material Safety Data Sheet

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Term
Acronym: MSDS
Maximum Contaminant Levels
Acronym: MCLs
Microbes
Definition: Microscopic organisms such as algae, insects, viruses, bacteria, fungi, and protozoa, some of which cause diseases.
Microbiologicals
Definition: See "Biological Contaminants."
Microenvironment
Definition: A particular part of the large environment that is in some way whole by itself. Used to describe a subset of the global environment such as the indoor environment.
Micrograms per Cubic Meter
Acronym: UG/M ³
Micrometer

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Term
Acronym: UM
Micron
Definition: A unit of linear measure equal to one millionth of a meter, or one thousandth of a millimeter.
Microorganism
Definition: A microscopic organism, especially a bacterium, fungus, or protozoan.
Milligrams per Cubic Meter
Acronym: Mg/M ³
Mist
Definition: Liquid particles measuring between 40 and 500 microns. By contrast, particles making up fog are less than 40 microns.
Mitigation
Definition: Measures taken to reduce adverse effects on the environment.
Morbidity
Definition: The number of sick individuals or cases of disease in a population.

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Mortality
Definition: The number of individual deaths in a population.
Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
Definition: A term used by some people to refer to a condition in which a person is considered to be sensitive to a number of chemicals at very low concentrations. There are a number of views about the existence, potential causes, and possible remedial actions regarding this phenomenon.
Acronym: MCS
Mutagen
Definition: Any substance e that can cause a change in genetic material.
Mutagenic
Definition: Able to cause a permanent change in the structure of DNA.
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Acronym: NIOSH
Natural Ventilation

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Definition: The movement of outdoor air into a space through intentionally provided openings, such as windows and doors, or through nonpowered ventilators or by infiltration.
Negative Pressure
Definition: Condition that exists when less air is supplied to a space than is exhausted from the space, so that the air pressure within that space is less than in surrounding areas.
Nitrogen Dioxide
Acronym: NO
Nitrogen Oxides
Definition: Nitrogen compounds such as NO and NO produced by combustion. They help to form ozone and photochemical smog. Acronym: NOX
Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Acronym: OSHA
Occupied Zone
Definition: The region within an occupied space between planes 3 and 72 in. (75 and 1800 mm) above the floor and more than 2 ft (600mm) from the walls or fixed air-conditioning equipment.

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Odor
Definition: A quality of gases, liquids, or particles that stimulates the olfactory organ or sense of smell.
Odor Character or Quality
Definition: The property of the odor sensation that permits a person to distinguish odors of different substances based on prior exposure.
Odor Descriptor
Definition: Adjective given to an odor such as "floral," "caramel," "putrid."
Odor Pervasiveness
Definition: The rate of decrease of odor perception associated with the decrease in odorant concentration.
Odor Threshold
Definition: Concentration of odorous air at which half of the judges in a panel detect the odor.
Odorant
Definition: A substance that stimulates the olfactory receptors.
Odorimetry

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Definition: Measurement of olfactory sensations.
Opacity
Definition: The amount of light obscured by particulate matter in the air.
Organic
Definition 1: Any compound containing carbon. Definition 2: Substances derived from living organisms.
Outdoor Air
Definition: Air taken from the external atmosphere and, therefore, not previously circulated through the system. Acronym: OA
Oxidation
Definition 1: A substance containing oxygen that reacts chemically to produce a new substance. Definition 2: A reaction in which oxygen combines with another substance.
Ozone
Definition: A very reactive oxidant containing three atoms of oxygen. Acronym: O
Particulate Matter

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Definition: A state of matter in which solid or liquid substances exist in the form of aggregated molecules or particles. Airborne particulate matter is typically in the size range of 0.01 to 100 micrometers.
Particulates
Definition: Fine liquid or solid particles such as dust, smoke, mist, fumes, and fog found in air and emissions.
Parts per Billion
Acronym: PPB
Parts per Million
Acronym: PPM
Pascal
Definition: Unit of pressure measurement.
Acronym: PA
Pathogenic
Definition: Capable of causing disease.
Pathogens

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Definition: Microorganisms that can cause disease in other organisms, humans, animals, or plants.
Perception
Definition: Awareness of the effects of stimuli.
Perimeter Induction Unit
Acronym: PIU
Permissible Exposure Limits
Definition: Standards set by OSHA.
Acronym: PELs
Persistence
Definition: Length of time a compound remains in the environment once introduced.
Pest
Definition: Any form of animal, plant, or terrestrial life that is injurious to health or the environment.
Pesticide

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Definition: Substance intended to control, prevent, or kill a pest.
pH
Definition: A measure of acidity or alkalinity on a scale of 0 to 14 where 7 is neutral. A pH less than 7 is acid and a pH greater than 7 is alkaline or base.
Phosphates
Definition: Alkaline builders used in detergents to soften water.
Phytotoxic
Definition: Something that harms plants.
Picocuries per Liter
Definition: A measure of radon concentration. Acronym: pCi/L
Plenum
Definition: Air compartment connected to a duct or ducts.
Plug Flow
Definition: A flow regime where the flow is predominately in one direction and contaminants are swept along with the flow.

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Plume
Definition: A visible or measurable discharge of a contaminant body from a given point of origin. Can be a visible body of pollution such as smoke coming from a stack or a measured amount such as heat in water coming from a power plant boiler.
Pollutant Pathways
Definition: Avenues for distribution of pollutants in a building. HVAC systems are the primary pathways in most building, however all building components interact to affect how air movement distributes pollutants.
Pollution
Definition: Unwanted by-product of human activity. the presence of matter or energy whose nature, location, or quantity produces undesired environmental effects.
Polychlorinated Biphenyls
Acronym: PCBs
Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons
Acronym: PAHs
Positive Pressure

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Term
Definition: Condition that exists when more air is supplied to a space than is exhausted, so the air pressure within that space is greater than that in surrounding areas.
Pressure, Total
Definition: In flowing air, the sum of the static pressure and the velocity pressure.
Pressure, Velocity
Definition: In flowing air, the pressure due to the velocity and density of the air.
Preventive Maintenance
Definition: Regular and systematic inspection, cleaning, and replacement of worn parts, materials, and systems. Preventive maintenance helps to prevent parts, material, and systems failure by ensuring that parts, materials and systems are in good working order.
Acronym: PM
Productivity
Definition: The efficiency with which a person performing a specific function does a job, or the output of a worker under specific environments and conditions.
Products of Incomplete Combustion
Definition: All particles and gases that are emitted from an object at the time it is burning.
Acronym: PICs

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Psychological Factors
Definition: Psychological, organizational, and personal stressors that could produce symptoms similar to poor indoor air quality.
Radiant Heat Transfer
Definition: Radiant heat transfer occurs when there is a large difference between the temperatures of two surfaces that are exposed to each other, but are not touching.
Radio Frequency
Definition: Portion of electromagnetic spectrum. Acronym: RF
Radon
Definition: A colorless, odorless gas that occurs naturally in almost all soil and rock. Radon migrates through the soil and groundwater and can enter buildings through cracks or other openings in the foundation. Radon can also enter well water. Exposure to radon can cause lung cancer.
Re-entrainment
Definition: Situation that occurs when the air being exhausted from a building is immediately brought back into the system through the air intake and other openings in the building envelope.
Re-entry

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Term
Definition: Situation that occurs when the air being exhausted from a building is immediately brought back into the system through the air intake and other openings in the building envelope.
Recirculated Air
Definition: Air removed from the conditioned space and used for ventilation, heating, cooling, humidification, or dehumidification.
Recommended Exposure Limits
Definition: Recommendations made by NIOSH.
Acronym: RELs
Relative Humidity
Acronym: RH
Residual
Definition: Amount of a pollutant remaining in the environment after a natural or technological process has taken place.
Respirable Particles
Definition: Respirable particles are those that penetrate into and are deposited in the nonciliated portion of the lung. Particles greater than 10 micrometers aerodynamic diameter are not respirable.
Respirable Suspended Particles

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Term
Acronym: RSP
Return Air
Definition: Air removed from a space to be then recirculated or exhausted.
Acronym: RA
Risk
Definition: The probability of injury, disease, or death under specific circumstances. In quantitative terms, risk is expressed in values ranging from zero, which represents the certainty that harm will not occur, to one, which represents the certainty that harm will occur.
Risk Assessment
Definition 1: The use of factual information to define the nature and impact of an adverse effect on individuals or populations who have been exposed to hazardous materials and situations. Definition 2: A quantitative or qualitative evaluation to determine the probability of an adverse effect to human health or the environment by exposure to specific pollutants.
Risk Communication
Definition: Exchange of information about health or environmental risks between risk assessors, risk managers, the general public, and other interest groups such as the news media.
Risk Management

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Term
Definition: The process of evaluating alternative responses to risks and selecting among them. Includes consideration of technical, scientific, social, economic, and political information.
Roof Top Unit
Definition: A packaged AHU unit on the roof. Acronym: RTU
Route of Exposure
Definition: The means by which toxic agents gain access to an organism such as ingestion, inhalation, dermal exposures; and intravenous, subcutaneous, intermuscular administrations.
Sanitation
Definition 1: Control of physical factors in the human environment that could harm development, health, or survival. Definition 2: Process of putting an environment into a state that will not harm human health.
Sanitizer
Definition: One of three groups of antimicrobials registered by EPA for public health uses. EPA considers an antimicrobial to be a sanitizer when it reduces but does not necessarily eliminate all the microorganisms on a treated surface. To be a registered sanitizer, the test results for a product must show a reduction of at least 99.9% in the number of each test microorganism over the parallel control.
Sensitization

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Term
<p>Definition: An allergic condition that usually affects the skin or lungs. Once exposure to a substance has caused a reaction, the individual may be sensitized to it, and further exposure may elicit an adverse reaction even at low levels.</p>
<p>Sewage</p>
<p>Definition: The waste and waste water produced by residential and commercial establishments and discharged into sewers.</p>
<p>Sewer</p>
<p>Definition: A channel or conduit that carries waste water and storm water runoff from the source to a treatment plant or receiving stream.</p>
<p>Short-Circuiting</p>
<p>Definition: Situation that occurs when the supply air flows to exhaust registers before entering the breathing zone. To avoid short-circuiting, the supply air must be delivered at a temperature and velocity that results in mixing throughout the space.</p>
<p>Sick-Building Syndrome</p>
<p>Definition: Term sometimes used to describe situations in which building occupants experience acute health and/or comfort effects that appear to be linked to time spent in a particular building, but where no specific illness or cause can be identified. The complaints may be localized in a particular room or zone, or may be spread throughout the building.</p> <p>Acronym: SBS</p>
<p>Sludge</p>
<p>Definition: A solid residue from air or water treatment processes. Can be a hazardous waste.</p>

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Term
Smoke
Definition: The airborne solid and liquid particles and gases that evolve when material undergoes pyrolysis or combustion.
Soil Gases
Definition: Gases that enter a building from the surrounding ground (e.g., radon, volatile organics, pesticides).
Solvent
Definition 1: A substance capable of dissolving or dispersing one or more other substances. Definition 2: The liquid component of a solution in which a substance is dissolved.
Sources
Definition: Sources of indoor air pollutants. Indoor air pollutants can originate within the building or be drawn in from outdoors. Common sources include people, room furnishings such as carpeting, photocopiers, art supplies, etc.
Square Feet
Acronym: Ft ²
Stack Effect
Definition: Pressure-driven airflow produced by convection as heated air rises, creating a positive pressure area at the top of a

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Term
building and a negative pressure area at the bottom of a building. The stack effect can overpower the mechanical system and disrupt ventilation and circulation in a building.
Static Pressure
Definition: Condition that exists when an equal amount of air is supplied to and exhausted from a space. At static pressure, equilibrium has been reached.
Sterilization
Definition: The destruction of all living organisms in water or on the surface of various materials. In contrast, disinfection is the destruction of most living organisms.
Sterilizer
Definition: One of three groups of antimicrobials registered by EPA for public health uses. EPA considers an antimicrobial to be a sterilizer when it destroys or eliminates all forms of bacteria, fungi, viruses, and their spores. Because spores are considered the most difficult form of a microorganism to destroy, EPA considers the term sporicide to be synonymous with "sterilizer."
Sulfur Hexafluoride
Definition: A physiologically inert gas used as a tracer in building investigations. Acronym: SF
Supply Air
Definition: That air delivered to the conditioned space and used for ventilation, heating, cooling, humidification, or dehumidification.

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Term
Acronym: SA
Surfactant
Definition 1: Surface active agent used in detergents to cause lathering. Definition 2: Surface active agent that cleans.
Synergism
Definition: Cooperative interaction of two or more chemicals or other phenomena producing a greater total effect than the sum of their individual effects.
Teratogen
Definition: Substance that causes malformation or serious deviation from normal development of embryos and fetuses.
Threshold Limit Values
Definition 1: Air concentration of chemical substances to which healthy workers can be exposed for 8-hour work days during a 40-hour work week without suffering an adverse effect. Definition 2: Guidelines recommended by ACGIH.
Acronym: TLVs
Total Suspended Particulate Concentration
Acronym: TSP
Total Suspended Particulate Matter

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Term
Definition: The mass of particles suspended in a unit volume of air when collected by a high-volume air sampler.
Total Volatile Organic Compounds
Acronym: TVOCs
Toxic
Definition: Of, affected by, or caused by a toxin; to cause a poisonous reaction.
Tracer Gases
Definition: Compounds, such as sulfur hexafluoride, which are used to identify suspected pollutant pathways and to quantify ventilation rates. Tracer gases may be detected qualitatively by their odor or quantitatively by air monitoring equipment.
Transfer Air
Definition: The movement of indoor air from one space to another.
Turbidity
Definition: Haziness in air caused by particles, or cloudy condition in water caused by suspended silt or organic matter.
Ulocladium

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Term
Definition: A rapidly growing, dark brown or black fungus that is a potential allergen. Its spores are unusually large (1015 um). It is typically found in soil and is frequently encountered at low levels indoors.
Underwriters' Laboratory
Acronym: UL
Upper Respiratory Tract
Definition: Structures that conduct air into the lungs, including the nasal cavity, mouth, pharynx, and larynx.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Definition: www.epa.gov
Acronym: EPA
Variable Air Volume System
Definition: Air handling system that conditions the air to a constant temperature and varies the outside airflow to ensure thermal comfort. Ventilation Air-Defined as the total air, which is a combination of the air brought into the system from the outdoors and the air that is being recirculated within the building. Sometimes, however, used in reference only to the air brought into the system from the outdoors.
Acronym: VAV
Vector

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Term
<p>Definition: An organism that carries disease such as an insect or rodent.</p>
<p>Ventilation</p> <p>Definition: The process of supplying and removing air by natural or mechanical means to and from any space. Such air may or may not be conditioned.</p>
<p>Viscosity</p> <p>Definition: Friction or resistance to the flow of a liquid.</p>
<p>Volatile</p> <p>Definition 1: Able to evaporate readily. Definition 2: Able to go to gas phase from a liquid or solid phase.</p>
<p>Volatile Organic Compounds</p> <p>Definition: Compounds that evaporate from the many housekeeping, maintenance, and building products made with organic chemicals. These compounds are released from products that are being used and that are in storage. In sufficient quantities, VOCs can cause eye, nose, and throat irritations, headaches, dizziness, visual disorders, memory impairment; some are known to cause cancer in animals; some are suspected of causing, or are known to cause, cancer in humans. At present, not much is known about what health effects occur at the levels of VOCs typically found in public and commercial buildings. VAPOR a substance in gas form, particularly one near equilibrium with its condensed phase, which does not obey the ideal gas laws; in general, any gas below its critical temperature.</p> <p>Acronym: VOCs</p>