## INDOOR AIR QUALITY AND SICK BUILDING SYNDROME: BASIC FACTS

Americans spend more than 90 percent of their time indoors.

Indoor air contains much higher concentrations of many pollutants than outdoor air. The World Health Organization estimates that 30% of the buildings in the United States experience indoor air quality problems.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ranks indoor air pollution, commonly called sick building syndrome, costs businesses \$60 billion annually.

Occupants of buildings with sick building syndrome complain of eye, nose, and throat irritation, headaches, dry cough, dry or itchy skin, dizziness, nausea, difficulty in concentrating, fatigue, and sensitivity to odors, according to the EPA. Relief occurs when the occupant leaves the affected building.

Building-related illnesses include sinusitis, bronchitis, asthma, humidifier fever, dermatitis, Legionnaire's Disease, and Pontiac Fever. These illnesses do not disappear when the occupant leaves the building.

The National Academy of Sciences recommends that indoor air pollution standards be set for workplaces, homes, and schools.

A growing number of buildings today receive inadequate amounts of fresh air, as a result of energy conservation measures.

To control air pollution effectively, buildings must be properly ventilated with adequate amounts of outdoor air, and internal pollutant sources and pathways must be controlled.

Identifying and controlling sources of indoor pollutants are the most direct control options in combating indoor air problems. With this consideration, manufacturers might need to redesign products to reduce pollutant emissions.

The state of Washington was the first state government to institute indoor air guidelines for construction materials, office furnishings, and equipment to be used in newly constructed buildings. Other states are currently developing such standards.