

2/5/19 Update on CONN OSHA COMPLAINT at WESTHILL

Follow-up meeting with Occupational Hygienist Lisa Casale of Connecticut OSHA on 2/5 to discuss her preliminary findings of an employee complaint of unsafe indoor air quality (IAQ) at Westhill High School.

CONN OSHA found 4 “apparent violations” which do not become formal “citations” until it is reviewed by CONN OSHA’s administrative staff. The four apparent violations as they were explained were as follows:

1. An electrical panel in a closet located in the Main Office did not have the required 30 inches of clearance required because there was a cardboard box on the floor directly in front of the electrical panel on the wall. This issue was resolved by WHS custodial staff while Ms. Casale was on-sight.
2. A “housekeeping violation” was issued because visible mold was found on an air diffuser in room 208. The original inspection was conducted prior to the air diffuser cleaning throughout the building. This issue was resolved prior to our 2/5 meeting.
3. A “housekeeping violation” was issued because a teacher’s house plant located in their classroom contained leaves that were dead.
4. The Safety Data Sheet for cleaning agent Shockwave No. 8310 that the Mold Task Force posted to its website in December was a 2009 version and not the most up-to-date Safety Data Sheet for Shockwave No. 8310 dated August, 2016. The Mold Task Force updated the posting to the most current version on 2/5. It should be noted that the correct sheet in physical printed form was located on each job site while the agent was being used in each building and available for inspection at anyone’s request, as prescribed by law. It should also be noted that there is little, if any, substantive changes between the two versions.

CONN OSHA’s air quality test results for mold for the areas in question did not reveal any elevated or “unsafe” air quality conditions, despite many of the samples having been taken in areas of the 200 wing prior to the Mold Task Force having commenced phase 1 cleaning. As we have heard from experts in the field, air quality tests are unreliable and indicative of little when testing for mold. The recommended course of action with respect to suspected mold growth is to visually inspect and remove mold growth while eliminating the underlying water intrusion. The Task Force designed and conducted building-wide Phase 1 cleaning because we identified suspect growth/mold in the building. We are concurrently assessing and eliminating water intrusion, where possible, and assessing further, long-term HVAC and building envelope issues.

With respect to IAQ comfort measures (temperature, humidity, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, etc.), CONN OSHA’s test results found no violations. While the OSHA carbon dioxide thresholds are arguably too high, the levels found in most rooms were at appropriate levels. In some rooms, the levels were slightly higher than appropriate. The Task Force is in the process of working with mechanical engineers to design replacements for the various roof-top units at WHS to ensure adequate air flow/distribution building-wide. This is not a quick process and will take upwards of two to three years to complete the installation. At the same time we are taking short-term measures to improve indoor air quality where possible.

The Mold Task Force continues to encourage any employee who has concerns about the safety of their work environment to file a complaint to CONN OSHA at **1-800-321-OSHA**.