

Indoor Environmental Quality



Tim Street Porter

People spend up to 90 percent of their time indoors, where research shows that the human dosage of harmful agents is significantly higher than outdoors—smog withstanding. Scientists have identified some 5,000 harmful chemical compounds indoors, and the U.S. EPA estimates that poor indoor environmental quality leads to productivity loss and health care costs of more than \$2 billion per year.

NRDC's building was designed to create a healthy, pleasant, and productive work environment. Offices are flooded with natural light and fresh air, all windows can be opened, the staff takes breaks on a landscaped rooftop terrace, and desk chairs are adjustable and ergonomically correct. The paints, adhesives, furniture, and other materials used throughout the building give off zero or low levels of harmful gases or volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and high efficiency exhaust fans remove VOCs and heat emitted by equipment such as copy machines and laser printers. Carbon dioxide levels are constantly monitored, and the building is free of urea-formaldehyde (the more harmful of two formaldehyde types used commercially) and vinyl, whose manufacture produces the potent carcinogen dioxin.



Jason G. Garman

Fiberboard

Meditate II, a wood-based panel manufactured from softwood resins and formaldehyde-free synthetic resin, was used for most of the building's cupboards and shelves, such as those in the library and workroom. Mediate II is made of 90 percent pre-consumer recycled wood. Maple, a fast-growing, nonthreatened domestic hardwood, was used as a veneer over the library bookshelves. Sierra Pine Composite Solutions, Roseville, California: 800-676-3339; www.sierrapine.com.



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Wall Base

Rubber wall base was substituted for vinyl base throughout the building, including in the offices, hallways and stairwells. Burke Mercer Flooring, San Jose, California: 800-447-8442; www.burkemerger.com/flooring/wall_base.asp.

Paint

Paint used inside and outside the building is Benjamin Moore's Pristine Eco Spec brand, a low-VOC, water-based acrylic paint. Benjamin Moore & Co.: www.benjaminmoore.com.

Exhaust Fans

Our building's equipment rooms, restrooms, and copy rooms are equipped with exhaust fans that remove indoor air pollutants, such as ozone and VOCs emitted by copy machines, and heat generated by office equipment. Fans in rooms used most frequently operate on an automatic time clock. Those in rooms used less are operated with manual switches to eliminate energy waste. All of the fans are energy efficient and low noise. They are manufactured by Penn Ventilation, Richardson, Texas: 972-234-3202; www.pennvent.com.

Carbon Dioxide Monitors

Carbon dioxide levels in high occupancy areas are constantly monitored. A light signal on the monitors reminds occupants to let more fresh air into the room. Carrier Corporation, Endicott, New York: 800-827-7435; www.global.carrier.com.



Flooring and Carpet Cleaning

Intex Solutions, Inc., provides our office with environmentally-friendly flooring and carpet cleaning services. The company uses products that are bottled in recycled containers and are free of chlorinated solvents, many of which have been linked to serious health problems including miscarriages, birth defects, and childhood leukemia. Its vacuums are equipped with filters that prevent the release of particulate matter into the air. The Intex headquarters is outfitted with solar panels, and the company's fleet consists of hybrid cars. The company is also a charter member of the California Climate Action Registry. Intex Solutions, Inc., Montebello, California: 323-720-3160; www.intexsolutions.com.