

# Steps to Prevent Indoor Air Quality Issues

Indoor air quality (IAQ) refers to the quality of air within and around buildings and structures. Having optimal indoor air quality (IAQ) is an important part of maintaining a healthy and safe building. Poor IAQ can lead to distress and discomfort among a building's occupants. Contact EHS at **(408) 924-1969** to report any indoor air quality concerns.

## Dry Sink and Floor Drain P-Traps

A plumbing device called a P-trap is used to stop foul-smelling sewer and plumbing fumes from entering a building. It is installed on a sink or floor drain. In campus buildings, the most common source of odors is a dried P-trap. Many times, odors are described as "rotten eggs" or sewage. The smells are also sporadic and can occasionally be overpowering.

Negative air pressure ventilation is more likely to draw smells from a drain in a laboratory than in an office. Positive pressure ventilation is present in offices. Dry traps can appear in floor drains, sinks covered by equipment or out of use, and "cup sinks," which are little sinks in the center of lab benches. Once a month, run a ½-gallon of water through every sink to prevent or get rid of smells caused by dry traps.



## Office/Building Remodeling

Odors from paint, primer, and new furniture (such as carpets and laminate floors) can spread throughout a building through the ventilation system. Most campus projects use low-odor materials, but even after the work is finished, building occupants may notice subtle smells, such as the "new car smell." It might take some time for this to go away. To get rid of the smells, maximize air circulation with continuous air circulation until the odor is gone.



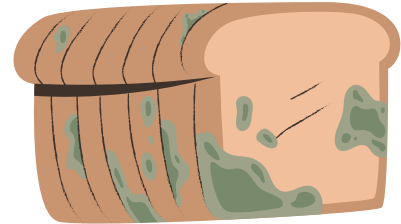
## Plug-in Scented Oil Air Fresheners

Using plug-in scented oil air fresheners are discouraged in work environments since they may contain chemicals that may cause eye and respiratory irritation.



## Spoiled Food

In refrigerators and offices, check for spoiled food, and throw it out right away if there is any. Keep refrigerators clean and check them on a regular basis.



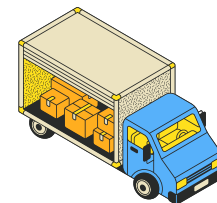
## Lab Chemicals

Labs are designed to maintain a negative pressure between the laboratory and adjacent non-laboratory spaces. This pressure differential keeps odorous vapors from moving from the laboratory into the surrounding spaces, like the hallways. Keep the lab door closed and adhere to best lab practices to minimize odors.



## Odors Entering the Building

Occasionally, diesel exhaust from stationary generators, delivery trucks, or construction equipment may penetrate buildings. California has a law against commercial truck and bus idling. Usually, the smell from these lasts temporarily. To prevent problems with indoor air quality, close the external doors and windows and request that drivers who are parked close to your building's fresh air intake turn off their engines. Speak with your appropriate administrator if the issue persists.



## References

- EPA: [Indoor Air Quality \(IAQ\)](#)