

Toxin Exposure Response

INDOOR AIR QUALITY PROJECT

Project:
Site Location:
Client:
Date:

COMMERCIAL BUILDING CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE RESPONSE
Holyoke, Massachusetts
Real Estate Management Client
2006

When an emergency weekend phone call to O'Reilly, Talbot & Okun Associates, Inc. (OTO) reported many employees in a large commercial building suddenly becoming ill, OTO's senior indoor air quality specialist, Bob Kirchherr, wasted no time getting to the property. Bob's extensive experience with industrial hygiene, emergency response, and indoor air quality issues led him to suspect that an airborne toxic chemical was to blame.

Before allowing anyone to enter the building, Bob met on-site with local and state safety officials. The first priority was to ensure the safety of the building's employees. This meant limiting access to the building for as long as necessary until the cause of illness was definitively identified and controlled. The safety officials at the site concurred with Bob, and the investigation began.

Bob formed a team of OTO staff to evaluate, without delay, each of the building's structures and environmental control systems. Their findings indicated that concentrations of carbon monoxide in the indoor air were well above normal levels. The source of the carbon monoxide was isolated when Bob's team found a critical flaw in the building's HVAC system; it was permitting combustion exhaust air, heavily laden with carbon monoxide, to circulate into the building. Following repairs to the HVAC system, the problem was quickly resolved. The duration of this project – from phone call to resolution – was only three days.

Bob then developed a program to continually monitor the building's indoor air quality. This monitoring program would render it highly unlikely that any undetected recurrence of toxic chemical exposure would occur. Knowing that the building had a reliable monitoring program in place gave the building's employees the confidence necessary to return to their workplaces.