

Tips for Conducting a School Environmental Walkthrough

A school environmental walkthrough is intended to give you an overview of conditions in the school that affect health and safety and teaching and learning. Put together an Environmental Health & Safety Team to conduct the walkthrough and integrate strategies into the schools Wellness Action Plan to address any issues you might observe.

TO CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL WALKTHROUGH:

- ✓ **Review** past environmental audits, especially the detailed reports completed by Facilities and Boston Public Health Commission prior to the walkthrough.
- ✓ **Include** the custodian or a building operations specialist on the walkthrough as they are most familiar with the operations and environmental and health history of the building.
- ✓ **Bring** a map of the school, flashlight, camera and notepad.
- ✓ **Inspect** all areas of the school thoroughly including classrooms, cafeteria, gym, auditorium, and special use rooms such as industrial arts, science laboratories. Consider hosting the walkthrough at different times of the day as conditions change.
- ✓ **Observe** the general level of air quality and cleanliness of the school. Look closely for signs of pests and conditions that foster pests such as door gaps, holes and clutter. Look for pollutant sources such as mold, improperly stored chemicals, dirty vents and blocked air flow caused by books or papers on top of unit ventilators or plywood covering outdoor air intakes.
- ✓ **Smell** for unusual or objectionable odors as you move from room to room.
- ✓ **Feel** for uncomfortable air temperatures, drafts, and very dry or humid conditions. Check heating systems to make sure they are in working order.
- ✓ **Listen** for unusual equipment noises or airflow where it shouldn't be. Listen to what building occupants have to tell you about their experience in the school.
- ✓ **Ask** school staff to tell you their concerns and experience regarding the indoor environmental health. They provide clues to problems and might raise things that you can't observe on your Walkthrough.

After the Walkthrough, environmental health & safety issues should be incorporated into the School's **Wellness Action Plan**. The Action Plan should list the priority issues you identified, who is responsible for each action and what the timeline is for correcting the issue. Some problems may be resolved immediately, such as moving books or furniture away from air vents but other items will require repairs, training or remediation.

For ongoing support, contact BPS Facilities Management or community partners such as MassCOSH Healthy Schools Initiative, Tolle Graham or Al Vega at 617.825.7233 x19 or 21

This document is adapted from the EPA Tools for Schools IAQ Toolkit: www.epa.gov/schools