

# VENTILATION CRITERIA AND DESIGN FOR GOOD INDOOR AIR QUALITY

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## ABSTRACT

An overview of current recommendations for the provision of outdoor air for the comfort of occupants engaged in sedentary activities is presented. The relationship between odour control, effective ventilation and room air movement is explored, in the context of both mechanically and naturally ventilated buildings. The contribution that ventilation can make in the prevention of "sick building syndrome" and the relative importance of building and occupant dependant odour sources and maintenance are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

The average person will spend more than 90% of their time in an artificial environment of one sort or another. Much of this time is spent working in an office or a factory. In many countries expanding economies and centralisation of services have led to a concentration of office space in the cities. The cost of land has shaped buildings into deep-plan high-rise structures. The cost of materials and the popularity of mirror glass has led to the sprouting of hundreds of "glass boxes" in the world's city scapes.

These boxes are sealed to keep out noise and pollution - mainly from traffic - and access to a window has become associated with status. Hence clerical staff, vdu operators and other junior personnel are relegated to the internal reaches of the building, whilst senior staff occupy individual offices at the perimeter.

Frequently the perimeter offices suffer from environmental problems associated with solar gain or draft, whilst the densely light absorbing mirror glass can give the impression of winter in summer and dusk during day.

Regardless of whether buildings are sealed their occupants require a continuous provision of outdoor air in order to ensure that the inhaled air does not reach an unacceptably high odour level. "Unacceptably high" is usually defined as a level above which 20% or more of the occupants are dissatisfied. The North

American standard "Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality" (1,2) uses this level of dissatisfaction in its definition of acceptable indoor air quality. A more elaborate model for acceptable indoor air quality may be evolved by combining this concept with the World Health Organisation's basis for establishing comfort guideline values for individual chemicals (3). Thus, indoor air quality may be said to be "acceptable" if less than 50% of the occupants can detect any odour, less than 20% experience discomfort, less than 10% suffer from mucosal irritation and less than 5% experience annoyance for less than 2% of the time.

The quantity and quality of outdoor air introduced to the space must be compatible with these aims. It is the quality of the air in the breathing zone of the occupants which is important, hence it must be introduced in such a manner that each occupant receives maximum benefit from the outdoor air which enters the buildings via windows or the external louvres of a ventilation plant.

#### ODOUR AND IRRITATION

Exposure to the constituents of non-industrial atmospheres usually involves exposure to a cocktail of thousands of substances all having relatively low concentrations compared to their occupational exposure limits. Typical individual concentrations are frequently in the order of one thousandth of the occupational exposure limit, or less (4).

The human nose is extremely sensitive to low concentrations of some chemical substances. For example it can detect  $1 \text{ mgm}^{-3}$  of Toluene (3), one of the most common of the volatile organic compounds (VOC's) to be found in the non-industrial atmosphere, whereas the ACGIH Threshold Limit Value, time weighted for a 40 hour working week, is  $375 \text{ mgm}^{-3}$ .

A substance which enters the nasal cavity may be sensed by two separate detection systems. The olfactory sense, which is responsible for odour detection, and the common chemical sense, which is sensitive to irritants. These two senses interact. For example it is possible for an odour to be disguised by irritation and vice versa (5). A single substance may evoke sensations of odour and irritation. Humans are known to adapt to odours with time, whereas irritation may be compounded with time (6,7). In the specific case of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, a recent study (8) has found that irritation intensity increases by a factor of 2 during the first hour of exposure, after which steady state occurs. The same study found that perceived odour intensity fell off by a factor of 50% and levelled out after only a few minutes.

A lot of everyday occurrences result in the release of odours, some of which may be perceived as pleasant, some unpleasant. Some evolve from the release of potentially harmful substances, although it is not usual for exposure to airborne contaminants in non-industrial buildings to be associated with irreversible health

effects. Exceptions have been noted for gas - mainly in homes - and

Apart from the occupancy of tobacco smoke, most modern buildings contain materials such as organic compounds, furniture, carpets, curtains, etc. which release odours, such as from photocopiers, such as mould spores, and so on which are not removed by ordinary ventilation.

Because odour perception is difficult to measure. Olfaction is being studied by trained panelists (9,10) but sensors are being developed which accurately measure odour. Sensors are available which measure odour quality. For example  $\text{CO}_2$  sensors are available which are indicative of the contribution of different materials. Unfortunately odour levels are not directly related to materials which do not emit odours.

An "air quality" sensor based on a semiconductor, the conductance of which varies with the amount of gas adsorbed. Gases are adsorbed on the surface. Unlike the nose, it cannot distinguish between different odours. Adsorption depends on the volatility of the substance and its relationship to the odour strength. For example isobutylpyrazine and ethanol have odour strengths of  $0.00000054 \text{ ppm}$  and  $120,000 \text{ ppm}$  respectively. Whereas the adsorption coefficients are likely to be similar. In an air quality sensor calibrated to give a good indication of odour and vice versa.

Studies have indicated that odour levels are at their lowest at humidity levels at normal comfort temperatures. The nature of the contaminant. Many materials, such as paint, etc. tends to reduce with time.

The adsorption of odours on surfaces and subsequent desorption as temperatures change, can lead to odour levels as conditions become normal. In a recent study (12) a panel of 10 people measured the odour intensity in bars once occupants had left. On average the odour intensity was higher in the bars once occupants had left, primarily due to the desorption of odours from the smoke, which had been adsorbed on the particulate matter, due

effects. Exceptions have been thought to include exposure to radon gas - mainly in homes - and lead from emissions in vehicle exhaust.

Apart from the occupancy-dependant body odours and environmental tobacco smoke, most modern offices contain other odour sources, such as organic compounds, used in the manufacture and cleaning of furniture, carpets, curtains and the building fabric, ozone, released from photocopiers and laser printers, micro-organisms, such as mould spores, and some of the gaseous external pollutants which are not removed by ordinary dry fabric filters.

Because odour perception is highly subjective it is extremely difficult to measure. Olfactometers have been developed for use by trained panelists (9,10) but no automatic sensor has yet been developed which accurately simulates the response of the nose. Sensors are available which give an approximate indication of air quality. For example CO<sub>2</sub> sensors provide a signal which is indicative of the contribution of body odour to the overall odour levels. Unfortunately odours are also emitted by processes and materials which do not emit CO<sub>2</sub>.

An "air quality" sensor adsorbs gases onto the porous surface of a semiconductor, the conductivity of which changes with the amount of gas adsorbed. Gases are alternately adsorbed and desorbed. Unlike the nose, it cannot distinguish between different potencies of odour. Adsorption depends on a number of factors, including the volatility of the substances. These factors are not directly related to the odour strength. For example 2-methoxy-3-isobutylpyrazine and ethane have odour detection thresholds of 0.00000054 ppm and 120,000 ppm respectively, a potency ratio of  $2.2 \times 10^{11}$ . Whereas the adsorption efficiencies of the two substances are likely to be similar. In more prosaic terms this means that an air quality sensor calibrated to respond to body odour would not give a good indication of the odour associated with tobacco smoke, and vice versa.

Studies have indicated (11) that general perceptions of odour are at their lowest at humidities in the range of 45 to 65%sat (rh) at normal comfort temperatures, although this varies with the nature of the contaminant. However the odour emission rate from many materials, such as paint, rubber, upholstery, floor coverings, etc. tends to reduce with falling humidity.

The adsorption of odours onto internal surfaces, and their subsequent desorption as temperature, air velocity and vapour pressures change, can lead to a considerable increase in odour levels as conditions become favourable for desorption. During one recent study (12) a panel of non-adapted people were asked to judge the odour intensity in bars during normal use and after all occupants had left. On average, odour intensities were judged to be higher in the bars once unoccupied. This was thought to be primarily due to the desorption of gaseous components of tobacco smoke, which had been adsorbed onto internal surfaces, along with the particulate matter, during occupancy.

It has been suggested (13) that for every occupant and associated odours in an air conditioned building, there could be up to 6 or 7 odour equivalents (olfs) associated with environmental tobacco smoke, building materials, furniture, mould spores and the internal components of the air handling system.

One study of eight air handling units (14) found that perceived odour intensity increased by an average of 0.81 decipol (0.19 - 1.67) through the units. Where 1 decipol is the odour intensity perceived by a trained panellist of the odours emitted by a standard person (1 olf) ventilated by 10 litres/s of odourless air.

Odours are released from the fungicides used to treat filter material and thermal wheels, as well as the lubricants and fan belts associated with motors and fans. Poorly maintained air handling systems release odours from accumulated dirt in filters and other internal surfaces. Bio-fouling of cooling coils, moisture eliminators and spray ponds is a particular problem.

This study (14) found that the filters were major polluters in nearly all of the ventilation systems examined, contributing 0.4 decipols on average. Two of the systems had thermal wheels and one a cross-flow heat exchanger which did not contribute to the perceived odour level in that system. The mean odour intensity for the three heat exchangers was 0.35 decipol. Three of the systems had inoperative spray humidifiers and one had a working steam humidifier which did not contribute to the perceived odour intensity. The mean odour intensity for the four humidifiers was 0.4 decipol.

#### VENTILATION

In recent years there has been a tendency to blame many of the complaints from people working in air conditioned office buildings on a lack of "fresh" air. Investigations (15,16) have shown that a perception of inadequate fresh air is frequently associated with lack of air movement, stuffiness, or the inability to open windows. There is usually very little correlation between the incidence of this complaint and the ventilation rate provided. Infiltration of outdoor air into naturally ventilated buildings in winter is frequently below recommended quantities, particularly for occupants working 5 or 6 metres from a window, yet SBS-related symptoms associated with these free-running buildings would appear to be less common than in the sealed air conditioned buildings. So just how important is "fresh" air? Should more attention be focussed on other aspects of air conditioned buildings, such as remoteness of some workers from a view or daylight, lack of personal control and prolonged vdu operation?

Outside air must reach certain minimum standards to be considered suitable for supply to occupants within a confined space. The new ASHRAE Standard (1) uses ambient air quality

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Country	Application
UK	odour control light smoking heavy smoking v heavy smoking
USA	offices (some smoking) auditoria conference rms smoking lounges
Finland	office room  open office  smoking room
Sweden	non-smoking are smoking areas
Nordic C'ntries	non-smoking are smoking areas
FRG	general spaces
Italy	offices/conf. theatres restaurants
Japan	general spaces

Table 1 Fresh air requir



standards produced by the US Environmental Protection Agency as a basis for their definition of "fresh air". This specifies long and short term limits for common pollutants only. If examination of records shows that these are exceeded then it is recommended that suitable air cleaning apparatus be installed.

Country	Application	f.a rate	Source
UK	odour control	8l/s/pers	CIBSE Guide (1986) Section B2: Vent'n & Air cond'g : Requirements
	light smoking	16l/s/pers	
	heavy smoking	24l/s/pers	
	v heavy smoking	32l/s/pers	
USA	offices (some smoking)	10l/s/pers	ASHRAE Standard 62-1989
	auditoria	8l/s/pers	
	conference rms	10l/s/pers	
	smoking lounges	40l/s/pers	
Finland	office room	10l/s/pers 1l/s/m <sup>2</sup>	National building code of Finland: Indoor climate & vent'n in buildings (1987)
	open office	10l/s/pers 1.5l/s/m <sup>2</sup>	
	smoking room	10l/s/pers	
Sweden	non-smoking areas	5l/s/pers	Swedish Building Code SBN 1988: Air Quality
	smoking areas	10l/s/pers	
Nordic C'ntries	non-smoking areas	10l/s/pers	Nordic Building Regs 1989 (Prelim.)
	smoking areas	20l/s/pers	
FRG	general spaces	5.6-8.3l/s /m <sup>2</sup>	DIN 1946 Part 2 (DE6)
Italy	offices/conf.	8.3-19.4	Standard UNI-CTI
	theatres	7-8.3	
	restaurants	11-13.9 (l/s/pers)	
Japan	general spaces	CO<10ppm CO <sub>2</sub> <1000ppm RSP<0.15mg /m <sup>3</sup>	Building Sanitation Management Standards Law

Table 1 Fresh air requirements of a number of countries

Exposure to CO<sub>2</sub> at low concentrations is not harmful to human health. An acceptable concentration is considered to be 2500ppm but it has been found that this level is not compatible with acceptable concentrations of odour emitting contaminants in the office environment (17). It is usual to work to a level of 1000ppm.

It can be estimated that a man standing quietly with a metabolic rate equivalent to 1.2met (1met = 58.5 Wm<sup>-2</sup>) expires about 0.005 litres s<sup>-1</sup> of CO<sub>2</sub>. If the outside air contains 300ppm of CO<sub>2</sub>, it can be shown that a dilution air flow rate of 2.3 litres s<sup>-1</sup> would prevent the concentration in the room rising above 2500ppm, assuming perfect mixing. After the oil crisis of the 1970's a fresh air rate of 2.5 litres s<sup>-1</sup> per person was adopted in North America as a minimum for sedentary activity with no smoking. At about the same time in the UK, CIBSE were recommending a minimum of 5 litres s<sup>-1</sup> per person.

Chamber studies carried out in North America (17) and Denmark (18) have shown that these rates were inadequate when considering odour levels perceived by non-adapted people, and that the density of occupants has no bearing on fresh air requirements. Minimum fresh air requirements have been increased accordingly to 8 litres s<sup>-1</sup> per person (see Table 1). These recommendations resulted also from concern over the incidence of ventilation-related problems in air conditioned buildings. These studies showed that there is a difference in perception between people entering a space and those who are acclimatised. Even with no smokers present, up to 40% of people entering a room supplied with 2.5 litres s<sup>-1</sup> of air per person will be dissatisfied, whereas if 8 litres s<sup>-1</sup> is available dissatisfaction was found to reduce to the acceptable level of 20%.

Unfortunately ventilation rate recommendations up to now, have not taken account of ventilation efficiency or odours released by the building and services. The new ASHRAE Standard (1) allows for the designer to calculate an appropriate ventilation rate from first principles. This "Indoor Air Quality Procedure" involves the calculation of a dilution or displacement ventilation rate, based on limiting concentrations for non-industrial exposure to contaminants and a prediction of the ventilation index. There is, however, a dearth of published limits for non-industrial exposure to contaminants.

#### Environmental Tobacco Smoke

Leaderer (17) has shown that allowances for environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) have also been inadequate in the past, particularly when catering for non-smokers entering the space. The issue is complicated by the fact that smoke evolves at a rapid rate and there may be high local concentrations the decay of which depend on room air movement. For low level supply systems smoke may rise vertically into the high level extract and dilution will occur at the central air handling unit, if recirculation is permitted. The plume will be very sensitive to cross-draughts from opening

doors, to the wakes generated by people entering the space.

Leaderer found that, in a space of 85m<sup>3</sup>, a fresh air rate of 85m<sup>3</sup> per hour takes 7.5 minutes to burn off a cigarette. In a large space may be served by a fresh air rate of 17.5 litres s<sup>-1</sup> should be used.

The new ASHRAE Standard 62-1989 recommends a lower smoking rate than the current ASHRAE Standard 62-1985. A change in US smoking habits has led to a change in US smoking habits among occupants. This results in a fresh air rate of tobacco smoke equal to 8 litres s<sup>-1</sup> per person. For "office space", having a minimum area of 14 m<sup>2</sup>, is 10 litres s<sup>-1</sup> per person. The minimum rate, such as in classrooms, are either of 8 litres s<sup>-1</sup> per person. Table 1 compares the proposed ASHRAE Standard 62-1989 with recommendations of CIBSE.

CIBSE recommendations are based on among non-adapted occupants. The categories are "some", "heavy" and "very heavy" with ventilation rates of 16, 20 and 25 litres s<sup>-1</sup> respectively.

Fanger et al (13) found that the emission of odours from a panel being smokers, is related to their smoking rates.

#### Intermittent and Transient Ventilation

For applications in which the surfaces are fleecy, cluttered or have high pre-dilution by bringing in fresh air when the occupancy arrives. For applications where it is possible to hold back fresh air until the occupancy are approaching unacceptable levels.

The new ASHRAE Standard 62-1989 allows for the lead and lag times dependent on their fresh air allowance. The designer should determine how long before the occupancy particular ventilation rate is required with overnight desorption of contaminants from previous day, along with other sources. The nomogram is based on fresh air rates for spaces with carpets, furniture and ceilings. For example, for a space with a fresh air rate of 16

doors, to the wakes generated by moving people, and to other disturbances.

Leaderer found that, in a room with perfect mixing, 75% of visitors to a space (i.e. non-adapted occupants) are satisfied if a fresh air rate of  $85\text{m}^3$  per cigarette is provided. If each cigarette takes 7.5 minutes to burn and if it is assumed that 10% of people in a large space may be smoking at any one time, a fresh air rate of  $17.5\text{ litres s}^{-1}$  should suffice.

The new ASHRAE Standard uses a different approach (2), based on a lower smoking rate than used by Leaderer, to account for the change in US smoking habits, and satisfying 80% of adapted occupants. This results in a minimum ventilation rate for dilution of tobacco smoke equal to that required for odour dilution, i.e.  $8\text{ litres s}^{-1}$  per person. However the fresh air rate proposed for "office space", having a maximum occupancy density of 1 person per  $14\text{ m}^2$ , is  $10\text{ litres s}^{-1}$  per person. The areas listed as requiring the minimum rate, such as auditoria, reception areas and classrooms, are either of a transitory nature or less likely to contain smokers. Table 1 gives selected recommendations extracted from the proposed ASHRAE "outdoor requirements for ventilation" compared with recommendations from other countries.

CIBSE recommendations are based on attaining 80% satisfaction among non-adapted occupants. They refer to rooms in which there is "some", "heavy" and "very heavy" smoking, corresponding with ventilation rates of 16, 24 and  $32\text{ litres s}^{-1}$  per person respectively.

Fanger et al (13) found that a further 2 olfs were contributed to the emission of odours by cigarette smoking: this is with 30% of their panel being smokers, although they provide no information on smoking rates.

#### Intermittent and Transitory Occupancy

For applications in which odours are likely to accumulate, on fleecy surfaces, cluttered shelving etc., it is useful to provide pre-dilution by bringing in the ventilation plant some time before the occupancy arrives. For rooms with smooth surfaces it may be possible to hold back fresh air provision until the odour levels are approaching unacceptable levels.

The new ASHRAE Standard (1) provides a technique for determining the lead and lag times depending on the room volume per person and their fresh air allowance. Nomograms are provided which can be used to determine how long before occupancy enter a space (lead time) a particular ventilation rate should be provided in order to deal with overnight desorption of contaminants adsorbed during the previous day, along with overnight outgassing from non-human sources. The nomogram is based on typical adsorption/desorption rates for spaces with carpets, soft furnishings, and textured walls and ceilings. For example, for an office density of  $30\text{m}^3$  per person and a fresh air rate of  $16\text{ litres/s}$  per person a lead time of 2

hours would be required.

Similarly, for low emission spaces, containing minimal fleecy surfaces or shelving, it can be determined that the fresh air damper could be kept closed for 30 minutes (lag time) after occupants first enter, assuming the same density and fresh air allowance as above.

Control methods are available which can be used to adjust fresh air rate according to the prevailing contamination levels. The CO<sub>2</sub> or air quality sensors mentioned earlier can be installed in the space or in extract ductwork and arranged to adjust the mixing dampers or switch fans accordingly. These methods can be used to provide automatic control over lag and lead operation and adjust fresh air volumes for transient and intermittent occupancy. However Fanger (13) found no correlation between CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations and odour perception, a finding which may throw some doubt on the validity of using CO<sub>2</sub> sensors for control of ventilation systems.

#### ROOM AIR MOVEMENT

Most air-conditioning and ventilation systems rely on grilles and diffusers to discharge supply air across a ceiling, which may also contain extract openings. Heat transfer and contaminant dilution rely on mixing of supply and room air, most of which occurs above the heads of the occupants. The usual aim is to create uniform temperature and air purity throughout the occupied zone, with a ventilation efficiency of unity. Usually some short-circuiting occurs, resulting in values less than unity. The momentum from supply jets can generate draughts and transfer contaminants, such as tobacco smoke, from source to recipient.

Systems which discharge air into the lower part of the room (20) are not usually designed to mix the supply and room air. Room air movement is primarily due to upward room convection currents, displacing room-generated contaminants which stratify above head level. Hence ventilation efficiencies are usually much higher. Unfortunately contaminants which are generated below head level, such as a smoke evolving from a cigarette lying in an ashtray, may find their way into the breathing zone of nearby occupants.

#### DISCUSSION

Swedish codes may soon reflect the trend, which is already prevalent in some Scandinavian countries, for full fresh air ventilation plant, with no recirculation but heat transfer by air-to-air heat exchanger. This follows the widespread adoption of displacement ventilation in those countries, which requires 100% outdoor air to maintain stratification of contaminated air above head level (20).

By contrast the new ASHRAE Standard (1) allows for a reduction in outdoor air rate, provided particulate and gaseous contaminants

are removed from the air space equivalent to that fresh air rates were employed. reduction in outdoor air emissions in multiple-room returning from low contaminated regions.

The American approach to minimise outdoor air supply the massive amounts of energy buildings, with floor area square metres, which are particularly with the wide conditioning and supply air proximity.

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are removed from the air by filtration, so that the level in the space equivalent to that which would be obtained if the recommended fresh air rates were employed. It also allows provision for a reduction in outdoor air rate to account for uneven contaminant emissions in multiple-room buildings, allowing for the air returning from low contamination zones to help with dilution in contaminated regions.

The American approach to ventilation, which allows the designer to minimise outdoor air supply, is no doubt born from concern about the massive amounts of energy required to ventilate their buildings, with floor areas commonly in the tens of thousands of square metres, which are very difficult to ventilate efficiently, particularly with the widespread use of variable air volume air conditioning and supply and extract air terminals in close proximity.

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