

Knowledge Brief: Indoor Environmental Quality

Poor indoor environmental quality is becoming a crisis in buildings throughout America.

According to a survey done in 1984 by the World Health Organization, nearly 30% of our nation's buildings have poor indoor air quality, commonly known as Sick Building Syndrome. Experts estimate the number of "sick" buildings to be as high as 50% and that the air inside most buildings is 2-5 times, and on occasion 100 times more polluted than outside air.

Fortunately, there are some proactive steps that you can take to improve indoor environmental quality. The first is solid engineering and architecture that considers IAQ as part of the design of HVAC systems and workplace layout. In existing buildings, retrofitting air filtration systems and ensuring the effectiveness of current systems can make a significant positive difference in the indoor environment. Another essential weapon against poor IAQ is continual monitoring and maintenance of air-distribution systems. But what many designers and facility professionals don't realize is that making the right choice of interior finishes, such as carpet, upholstery or paint, can also improve the quality of the interior environment. Many materials are specifically engineered to minimize airborne contaminants and to inhibit microbial growth.

For nearly a decade, Interface has been involved in research and innovation on indoor air quality. We founded the Envirosense® Consortium, a non-profit membership organization with a collaborative focus on a "Total Systems Approach" to addressing indoor environmental issues.

The Consortium, which has a web site at www.envirosense.org, monitors legislative and regulatory activities relating to IAQ, gathers and disseminates knowledge and research on a variety of indoor environmental issues, and also serves as an information resource for the public.

Intersept® is an antimicrobial preservative developed, patented and manufactured by Interface. Used in Interface carpet products as well as by leading manufacturers of HVAC equipment, adhesives, air filters, paint, interior fabrics, wall coverings and ceiling tiles to provide enhanced protection to their products. Intersept is effective against a broad spectrum of bacteria and fungi,

inhibiting the growth of mold, mildew, bacteria and odor-causing microorganisms.

Intersept is registered by the EPA and carpet incorporating Intersept meets stringent certification standards set by the three most recognized testing protocols related to indoor environmental quality -- the State of Washington Protocol, CRI Green Label and GSA Antimicrobial Certification. Yet, despite its proven ability as a microbial inhibiting preservative, Intersept is low in toxicity and contains no arsenic, heavy metals, phenols or formaldehyde.

Besides supplying Intersept to other companies, we also include it in almost everything we manufacture. It's incorporated into all Interface carpet adhesives and nearly all of our carpet and maintenance products. Carpet that includes Intersept is guaranteed to remain effective for the life of the carpet, assuming proper maintenance.

Intersept isn't the only Interface innovation that addresses IAQ. We also offer floor covering products with a moisture impermeable backing system that acts as an impermeable moisture barrier, preventing the absorption of liquids that can cause microbiological growth and odors. To ensure the integrity of the barrier on our two-meter Performance Broadloom products, the seams of the floor covering may be permanently welded during installation. The result: spilled fluids and biological contaminants are kept on the floor surface for efficient removal.

In addition to our advanced backing systems, we've developed adhesive solutions that help improve indoor environmental quality by reducing airborne emissions. Most carpet is installed with wet adhesives that release high levels of VOCs (volatile organic compounds). At Interface, we've developed a unique, completely dry adhesive system, called GridStrip™, for our structured back products. It uses a releasable adhesive in a peel-and-stick format that allows for fast installations.

At Interface, we share your concern about the indoor environment, and we're ready to help. To learn how, contact your local Interface Account Executive. Or visit us on the web at www.interfaceinc.com