

Recommended District Policy for Carpeting in Schools.

General

1. Recognize the potential problematic health implications of carpeting in schools, particularly in basements and on bare concrete, where moisture and mold are potential problems.
2. Consider carpeting those areas of schools where teachers and administrators are likely to bring in their own area-rugs, mats, and carpets (eg: places where students sit on the floor, noisy areas where carpeting is needed to buffer the echo of sound.)

When carpeting areas of a school:

1. Clean old carpet before removal and clean the area thoroughly prior to installation of new carpet. (Otherwise the dust and dirt of the old carpet is emitted into the air system and collects onto the new carpet).
2. Assure that only approved carpets with specific properties be allowed into the school district. The following properties (and in this order of importance) are recommended: low pile density in loop carpet, low height, fluorocarbon coating of fibers, high denier per filament, and a fiber shape with a low surface area. These properties are associated with increased release and recovery of common allergens when vacuumed.
3. Area rugs and children's mats need to meet the same health standards as wall-to-wall carpeting in schools (#2 above).
4. For large renovation projects, request that the manufacturer specify the adhesive, offer a warranty for volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions, and test beyond federal standards for a total VOC emission level that is less than 100 mcg/m²/hour (measured after 24 hours).
5. Use new, available non-adhesive fastening systems. If adhesive is absolutely necessary, utilize solvent-free, low VOC products.
6. Pre-ventilate carpets elsewhere for several days, when there are VOCs present.
7. Maximize ventilation during installation and isolate the area from the rest of the school (including air circulation).
8. Clean the new carpet prior to opening area to students and staff. Use HEPA filtration vacuum (to remove any loose fibers and particles resulting from the installation process).
9. Keep students and staff away from the newly installed carpets as long as possible.
10. Keep carpet away from entrances where toxins track in from the outside and water sources.

General Maintenance of Carpets

1. Area-rugs and students' mats need to be included with wall-to-wall carpeting as part of the district's maintenance responsibilities.
2. Provide deep, extensive vacuuming at least every other day with High-Efficiency vacuums and HEPA-style filters in order to control contaminant levels in carpets.
3. Ensure adequate, continuous ventilation throughout the carpeted space.
4. Replace wet carpets, rather than try to dry them and preserve (because of mold and mildew residues that cannot be removed).
5. Provide steam-cleaning to carpets regularly.
6. Do not consider use of the acaricide "Benzyl Benzoate" or denaturing agent "Tannic Acid" at this time.
7. Replace carpeting frequently.

February 2002

References supporting this district policy are available on request

Howard Taras, MD; District Medical Consultant; 858-627-7595
Jack Campana; Director Student Support Services; 858-627-7445