Potential Environmental Hazards in Day Care Facilities

Why should I be concerned about environmental hazards inside and outside of the day care facility?

• Very young children spend most of their time near the ground where environmental hazards may exist.
• Children crawl and put things in their mouths.
• Illness and disease may be caused by contact with environmental hazards.
• Children are still developing and are more vulnerable to many environmental pollutants.

What are some common environmental hazards that may be present in the day care setting?

• Carbon monoxide
• Dust/dirt
• Craft supplies
• Mold
• Cleaning products
• Lead paint
• Chemicals in soil
• Arsenic in pressure-treated wood
• Radon gas
• Second-hand tobacco smoke
• Pesticides/insect repellants

What can I do to reduce environmental hazards?

Mold
• Repair leaky plumbing and clean up standing water promptly to prevent bacteria & mold growth.
• Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and dry completely.
• Remove and discard carpets/rugs if they have been wet more than 24 hours; do not let children play or sleep in/near the area.

Carbon Monoxide
• Install at least one carbon monoxide detector on each occupied level of the facility and maintain it properly.
• Maintain fuel-burning appliances with a yearly checkup and cleaning.

Chemicals in Soil
• Cover bare soil with grass or mulch.
• Keep children’s play area away from the building foundation.
• Have children wash their hands and face after playing outdoors.

Second Hand Smoke
• Never allow smoking anywhere in the building/home or grounds.
Dirt/Dust
- Keep carpets clean.
- Use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter and vacuum only when children are not present.
- Use barrier mats at each entrance.

Cleaning Products
- Avoid using cleaning products around children.
- Store cleaning products in a separate locked area.
- Switch to products that contain less toxic chemicals (“green” products).

Arsenic in Pressure-treated wood
- Seal decks and playscapes with a weather-resistant coating such as a penetrating, oil-based stain.
- Keep children out from under the deck area.
- Put a fresh layer of sand or wood chips under playscapes after sealing.

Pesticides/Insect Repellants
- Empty garbage frequently, at least daily, to an exterior location.
- Store food in closed containers.
- Consider non-chemical options to control weeds and pests.
- Use insect repellants with no more than 10% DEET (do not use on infants).
- Remove standing water after rainfall to prevent mosquito breeding.

Craft Supplies
- Buy ACMI (Art & Creative Materials Institute) approved products labeled “A” for use by young children.

Lead Paint
- Wash children’s hands often, especially before eating or napping.
- Keep play area clean: wash bottles, pacifiers, toys and stuffed animals regularly.
- Test for lead in homes built before 1978.

More information about lead regulations can be found at: www.ct.gov/dph/lead or 860-509-7299.

Radon
- Test for radon between the months of November and April as required for daycare centers and group daycare homes that use the 1st floor or basement.
- Reduce high levels of radon, when found.

More information about radon regulations can be found at: www.ct.gov/dph/lead or 860-509-7367.

More information about environmental hazards can be found on the CTDPH web site: www.ct.gov/dph/ieq or by contacting the Environmental and Occupational Health Assessment Program at 860-509-7740.

State statutes and regulations regarding the environment in child day care facilities can be found in Section 19a-79-7 (centers and group homes) and in Section 19a-87b-9 (family day care homes) of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Additional Resources:

Connecticut Department of Public Health Day Care Regulations Unit: www.ct.gov/dph/daycare
Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/iaq
Children’s Health Environmental Coalition: www.checnet.org/healthehouse
Art and Creative Materials Institute: www.acminet.org