

**Dragon, Karen E. (CDC/NIOSH/EID)**

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**From:** Gil Vice [gilvice@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2011 12:28 PM  
**To:** NIOSH Docket Office (CDC)  
**Subject:** reference to docket number NIOSH-238  
**Attachments:** NIOSH docket 238 Gil Vice.doc

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I am writing in response for comments on indoor air quality, docket reference number NIOSH-238.

This item is very welcome and long overdue. I would prefer however that this topic become regulation rather than just guideline. My reason is my personal history. I worked at Cognis Corporation in Cincinnati Ohio, specializing in FTIR and NMR spectrometry in the research lab. At age 47, I started developing a severe cough whenever I worked in the NMR lab, a room with its own dedicated HVAC system separate from the rest of the building. The room had a very musty odor. Despite this, management insisted my problem was from my home or somewhere else. It took more than two years to get the problem HVAC system properly addressed. During that time my sensitivity increased drastically. I learned the cooling coils were at 70 degF or higher during the summer, way too high to dehumidify, there was fiberglass insulation throughout the ducts, and there was a water injection system to regulate humidity for a previous application in that room. Also, filters were cheap fiberglass, hardly ever changed.

I eventually got sick enough that I took early retirement at age 54 from a job I very much enjoyed when I wasn't sick. At one point our lab manager and I spoke with Mr. Tracy Wilcoxon, an IAQ specialist with Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation. He informed them of all the problems and made several suggestions on how to eliminate and prevent further problems. All that costs money, and ignoring the problem costs nothing. You can probably guess which path the company took.

I have been retired almost ten years, and now live in Pulaski Virginia. Though I am healthy most of the time, I still have that same sensitivity to moldy HVAC systems. This is a big problem with most churches which operate cooling only on Sunday morning. Even when there is no musty odor I can stay in most churches less than three minutes before starting to cough. If I don't leave soon enough, I get very short of breath for a day or longer. Interestingly, I've never had a problem in WalMart or Burger King, places whose HVAC operates 24/7, but do have problems in some independent businesses. I also have extreme sensitivity to smoke, dust, pets, and many cosmetics and personal care products used by other people. All this started from the exposure to the moldy HVAC system, and would probably not be so extreme had there been bio-aerosol regulations, not just ignorable guidelines.

One other comment: your paper recommends seeing your healthcare provider if your problem

worsens. I found that to be a waste of time. I was seen in 1997 by Dr. Jonathon Bernstein at University of Cincinnati Medical Center. He tested me for allergy and could not determine any. I was also seen by occupational lung disease specialist Stephen Wintermeyer and allergist William Baker at Indiana University Medical Center in 1999 after I had been on sick leave two months. They also could not find any allergies or other problems and determined no permanent lung damage was done and it was safe for me to return to work, to the environment to which I was adversely reacting. At both medical facilities I was given a methacholine challenge test to see if I had asthma: negative. Spirometry was normal after this two month sick leave, but peak flow dropped 25% when at work. At times I have been prescribed Serevent, Flovent, Singulair, Accolate, and a few other drugs. None of these do anything to decrease sensitivity. Very short exposure to any of the above irritants (allergens?) trigger the cough reflex no matter what medication I have taken, though albuterol seems to shorten the period of congestion. Maybe some doctors have been better trained on this issue, but not the two doctors I have seen in the small Virginia town where I now live. Only by paying scrupulous attention to my surroundings and to those around me do I stay healthy.