

Housing and Health

Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) contributes to the protection and promotion of the health and well-being of people living in First Nations communities south of 60° parallel through inspections and providing advice to occupants and community administration.

Housing inspections are based on conditions that make housing safe, sanitary and fit for human habitation. The program focuses on factors that affect indoor air quality, such as mold, vermiculite, radon, and encompasses areas that may adversely affect the health/or safety of the occupants, such as solid waste disposal, sewage, drinking water quality and adequate privacy for the individual (overcrowding).

The program is oriented towards a healthy housing concept. This includes being free from environmental hazards, being built to recognized building code suitable for the location, being maintained and cared for in such a manner that the health of occupants are not adversely affected. The builders, owners as well as occupants all play a vital role in healthy housing.

Roles of the Environmental Health Officers

Upon request of the appropriate authority on reserve, Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health provides environmental public health inspections of public housing units and makes recommendations to Chiefs and Councils or their delegates based on potential public health impacts. Health Canada also delivers information and awareness materials on identifying, remediating and preventing environmental public health issues in housing,

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) conduct non-intrusive visual inspections of the living space of a given housing unit to identify potential health hazards. This includes:

- i Close observation and taking notes and photographs of all exposed building materials using common inspection tools;
- ii Examining the physical structure, care and maintenance of the home, and noting occupancy load;
- iii Noting any potential sources of indoor air contaminants;
- iv Outlining further actions (if needed) which may include more in-depth investigation and providing additional information on any concerns with regards to specific indoor contaminants;
- v Recommending immediate actions and/or maintenance to minimize reoccurrence or prevent other environmental health issues from becoming a problem;
- vi Informing occupants of the house of the findings from the inspection; and
- vii Reporting to the Chief & Council and other health professionals as necessary.

For more information, please contact the closest regional office:

<p>Atlantic Region 15th Floor, Suite 1525, Maritime Centre 1505 Barrington Street Halifax, NS BJ3 3Y6 Tel: 902 426-0960</p>	<p>Quebec Region 2nd Floor, East Tower 200 René Lévesque Blvd., West Montréal, Québec H2Z 1X4 Tel: 514 283-3169</p>
<p>Ontario Region 58 Dalhousie Street Room 211 Brantford, ON N3T 2J2 Tel: 519 751-6503</p>	<p>Manitoba Region Room 300, 391 York Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4W1 Tel: 204 983-2615</p>
<p>Saskatchewan Region Chateau Towers, 18th Floor 1920 Broad Street Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V2 Tel: 306 780-5434</p>	<p>Alberta Region Suite 730, 9700 Jasper Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4C3 Tel : 780 495-5114</p>
<p>Pacific Region 404-1138 Melville Street Vancouver, BC V6E 4S3 Tel: 604-666-9766</p>	

The followings are Health Canada web links that provide information on health risks related to indoor air quality:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/environ/air_e.html

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/environ/radon_e.html

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/environ/wood-bois_e.html

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/environ/formaldehyde_e.html

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/prod/insulation-isolant_e.html