

# Sick building syndrome & building related illness

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Sick Building Syndrome is a situation in which a substantial percentage of building occupants experience acute negative physical and mental effects that appear to be linked to time spent in a contaminated area where the cause cannot be identified. In addition most of the complaints are relieved when the occupants leave the building.

The term 'Building Related Illness' (BRI) is used to describe specific and clear causes of illness related to the building environment, such as legionnaire's disease.

Contributing parameters to SBS are:

- Thermal comfort level
- Amount of outside air ventilation
- Concentration of respirable and non-respirable suspended particulates
- Concentration of carbon monoxide
- Combustion gases
- Noise, vibration and lighting
- Electromagnetic radiation

- Volatile organic compounds (VOC)
- Formaldehyde : the most common VOC
- Biological contaminants

How do you know if your building suffers from SBS?

Is employee absenteeism high?

- Do your employees often complain of headaches, nausea, skin irritation, burning eyes, sore throats, fatigue, sneezing, fever or chills?
- Is employee productivity low or decreasing?
- Is dirt or dust visible around your air register, grilles or in the atmosphere?



THE TERM 'SICK BUILDING SYNDROME' (SBS) SYMPTOMS COMMONLY INCLUDE SORE AND WATERING EYES, NASAL BLOCKAGE, SNEEZING, DRY THROAT, HEADACHES, FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS, CHEST TIGHTNESS, LETHARGY, FATIGUE AND LACK OF CONCENTRATION DUE TO BACTERIAL, MOULD AND VIRAL CONTAMINATION.

- Do you notice unpleasant lingering odours such as fumes from cleaning solvents, draperies, carpets or copying machine liquids?
- Is there mould/slime or obvious microbial growth on any building material, furniture, carpet or within the HVAC system?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, call Opira for a review of your indoor air quality.

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