

# FACT SHEET



Connecticut Department of Public Health  
Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program  
410 Capitol Avenue MS # 11EOH, PO Box 340308  
Hartford, CT 06134-0308  
(860) 509-7740  
[www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph)

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## *School Re-roofing and Health*

### **Background**

The Connecticut Department of Public Health often receive complaints from occupants of schools that are undergoing re-roofing operations. These complaints usually stem from contamination of the indoor environment by vapors coming from the re-roofing operations.



### **How Can Roofing Operations Affect the Health of Building Occupants?**

Vapors capable of causing adverse health effects are given off by most re-roofing operations, including: application of coal tar pitch, asphalt, polyurethane, and single-ply membrane roofs. Although the type and degree of toxicity of the vapors does vary among procedures, the resultant problems and complaints are usually similar. Most building occupants exposed to these vapors complain of one or more of the following: eye irritation, nose irritation, throat irritation, nausea, and headache. In addition, many occupants complain about the objectionable odors associated with some roofing operations. Generally these are short-term exposures that are unlikely to cause long-term problems.

### **How Can School Officials Avoid Problems?**

- The major step you can take to avoid problems is to keep everyone informed and provide for good communication. Make sure that the school administration, roofing contractor, and architect have a meeting before the re-roofing operation starts to discuss appropriate precautions to prevent student and teacher exposure to roofing vapors.
- The easiest way to avoid exposures is to schedule re-roofing operations, whenever possible, when the school is not occupied. This is especially important when coal tar pitch is being applied.
- Other precautions should be taken to limit the amount of vapors entering a school. These include: keeping the kettles covered, turning off the air intakes on air handling units near roofing operations, keeping doors and windows closed on the side nearest the kettle, and locating the kettles on the building side with fewest doors/windows. Classes might also be rescheduled to keep students and staff away from the work area. Airing out the school after the re-roofing operation may also be useful.

### **If Problems Occur:**

In the event that problems or complaints do occur, take quick action. A call to your local health department should be your first step. For assistance with health-related questions, please contact the Department of Public Health at the number above. In the event of complaints and problems, job scheduling or re-roofing procedures may have to be altered.