

Do You Really Want Your Workers Breathing This Air?



What's wrong with this picture?



This dusty vent isn't just an embarrassing eyesore; it's also a serious health and liability risk.

Moral: OSHA doesn't have a general ventilation or Indoor Air Quality standard. But an OSHA inspector who sees a vent like the one in this picture wouldn't hesitate a moment to cite you under the General Duty Clause, Sec. 5(a)(1) of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act*, which requires employers to protect workers from known hazards that can cause serious illness or injury

Ventilation and Indoor Air Quality

What's at Stake: 3 Reasons to Pay Attention

1. The air of many workplaces contain dusts, molds, gases and other “contaminants” that can harm your health if you breathe them in
2. Industrial ventilation systems are designed to protect you against these airborne contaminants and make the air safe to breathe
3. Ventilation systems that aren’t properly cleaned and maintained—like the one in the photo above—not only won’t protect you but may make the indoor air quality even worse

5 Types of Ventilation Systems

There are 5 types of basic ventilation systems used in industrial work settings:

1. Dilution & General Exhaust Removal Systems



2. Local Exhaust Systems



3. Makeup Air (or Replacement) Systems



4. HVAC (Heating, Ventilation & Air-Conditioning) Systems



5. Recirculation Systems



Ventilation Safety Types

Here are 8 things to do to ensure the air you breathe at work is properly ventilated and safe to breathe

Know Your Rights—Recognize that you have a right (and the company has an obligation to supply) safe, breathable air at work

Speak Up—Recognize your responsibility to assert your rights to clean air and notify your supervisor if you ever see a filthy vent like the one in the photo

Ask Questions—To ensure that the ventilation system is properly maintained, ask if: All work performed on ventilation systems is done by what OSHA considers a “competent person”

- The ventilation system and all of its components are inspected regularly
- The ventilation is cleaned regularly
- Routine and preventive maintenance is performed on the system
- Ventilation openings are unblocked and clean
- The company notifies you about dangerous contaminants in the air and what you must do to prevent them from getting you sick