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Is indoor air quality now an incentive for employees?

By: Dan Rafter

As the number of new COVID-19 cases continues to fall across the United States, it might finally be time for the majority of companies to bring at least some of their workers back to the office.

And that means that the indoor air quality of office buildings is again an important topic. Companies can require that their employees be vaccinated or wear a mask, but boosting the indoor air quality of offices is a key way to stop the spread of COVID, too.

Unfortunately, indoor air quality is often ignored in mitigation efforts, largely because it is so expensive to boost the air quality systems of office spaces.

This is borne out by a new survey from [Honeywell](#), one finding that most office employees work in spaces in which indoor air quality is not monitored.

In a survey of U.S. office workers, just one-third of respondents said that their workplace monitors its indoor air quality continuously or often, according to the report released today by Honeywell.

The study, Workplace Air Quality: A Global Concern Emerges, focuses on Honeywell's second annual Healthy Buildings Survey. In the survey, 3,000 workers in buildings with 500-plus workers in ASEAN, Germany, India, the Middle East, the United Kingdom and the United States, all reported on their concerns about the indoor air quality of their offices.

A total of 82 percent of surveyed U.S. office workers told Honeywell that they are more worried about indoor air quality today because of the rise of COVID-19 variants. Honeywell says that the concerns of these employees are compounded by a lack of indoor air quality monitoring and information received either from employers or made available to employees.

A total of 55 percent of U.S. respondents who are currently working inside a building say it is very to extremely important for them to be informed on indoor air quality. But almost half — 47 percent — rarely or never receive indoor air quality updates.

These results should matter to employers. According to the survey, 65 percent of U.S. respondents say they're ready to leave their jobs if their employers don't take steps to create a healthier indoor environment.



Ninety-one percent of U.S. office workers surveyed responded that the quality of air they breathe has a direct impact on their health and well-being. The top health benefits of safe indoor air quality, according to those surveyed in the United States, include:

- Exposure to fewer airborne contaminants (67 percent)
- Fewer allergic responses, resulting in less sneezing or coughing (61 percent)
- Better overall physical health (60 percent)
- Better overall mental health (48 percent)
- Improved productivity and problem-solving (38 percent)

Additional findings of note include:

- 77 percent of U.S. office workers said that indoor air is less healthy to breathe than outdoor air.
- Four in 10 U.S. respondents do not know that CO2 levels factor into IAQ, and 39 percent are unaware that humidity plays a part.

“An overwhelming majority of U.S. respondents called out the importance of the quality of air they breathe and its direct impact on their health and well-being,” said Doug Wright, president and chief executive officer of Honeywell Building Technologies, in a written statement.

“In a competitive labor market, demonstrating an effort to create a healthier work environment can be an advantage in attracting and retaining employees,” Wright said. “Every dollar invested in upgrading workplace air quality, monitoring indoor air quality data and communicating it to employees is a dollar strategically spent.”

