

Corona Clean Air Committee of the Tempe Chandler PTSA

Frequently Asked Questions

July 14, 2008

What are the Committee's goals? The TCPTSA is working to promote trust and transparency between the Tempe Union High School District and the parents of district students, and to promote the same between the TUHSD Governing Board and its constituents. Our end goal is the safety of the students and staff at Corona.

What should I know about flooring removal at Corona? All flooring (except for newer flooring in the hallways, offices, and auditorium) has been removed over the summer. All layers (carpet, 2 layers of carpet, and any old tile underneath) have been removed. Above-standard procedures have been used to provide good containment and protection of the ventilation systems during the carpet removal. Oversight has been provided by the AZ Dept. of Health Services (ADHS) and Health Effects Group provided visual inspection of the walls that were uncovered when cove base was removed.

What new flooring is being installed? While the original plan called for approximately 80% of Corona flooring to be carpet, the current plan is for 85% of the new flooring material to be VCT (vinyl chloride tile) and only 15% carpet – a huge improvement. The rooms that will be carpeted include the music rooms, the library, and the computer lab.

Are the plans for the music rooms to be recovered in carpet? Yes. Only one classroom in the C Building was ever tested for CO2 levels (and the results were elevated levels, at 1,500 ppm), indicating poor ventilation. These areas are heavily trafficked with hundreds of Corona music students. The reasons given by the District for choosing this material relate to acoustical necessity, and the fact that ASU uses the same material in their music rooms. There are two notable differences: The C Building at Corona is poorly ventilated; ASU has adequate ventilation. Corona is using 12 foot rolls of vinyl-backed carpet, allowing for zero moisture release; ASU uses 12"x12" carpet squares, which allow for ground/concrete moisture to breathe through the tiles.

Tell me about the mold found in early July. There were five areas of mold found when cove base was removed for the flooring removal. The "Limited Visual Inspection" was performed by Health Effects Group (as directed by the TUHSD insurer – the Arizona Risk Retention Trust). This was neither a comprehensive testing for mold nor was it performed by an "independent" contractor. The mold was removed with proper mold containment and supervision. The ADHS will be hiring an independent contractor to investigate further. Their consultant will do destructive testing where necessary (i.e., look above ceiling tiles and behind walls).

How big were the areas of mold found? At the TUHSD Board meeting on July 9, Bob Anderson showed a photograph of one spot that was approximately the size of a house key. Board Member Michelle Helm asked if that spot was representative of the other four; Mr. Anderson responded that some "areas" contained "several spots that size." The report from Health Effects group listed the following five areas (full report available at www.coronacleanair.com):

"less than four square inches of water damage/visible growth"

"less than four square inches of water damage and/or visible fungal growth"

"approx. 20 linear feet of water damage and visible growth"

"less than eight square inches of water damage/visible fungal growth"

"less than three feet of water damage and/or visible fungal growth"

No photographs have been made available other than the one shown at the Board Meeting.

Is the plan to fix the ventilation in buildings other than E building? The only plans that have been submitted to the City of Tempe are for Building E. The District may have plans to fix the ventilation in the other buildings, but the plans have not been drawn nor priced. It is unclear what the final price tag of the full fix will be.

Will the CO₂ issue be resolved when kids return to school on August 5? It is our understanding that a temporary fix should be in place for the return of staff and students; this includes large fans to bring outdoor air into the E building and ventilation between the rooms to help the air flow. No other building is receiving a fix during this phase of the construction. It is unknown how much this will help the CO₂ levels and unclear what the addition of outdoor air will do to the classroom temperatures. According to recent plans, CO₂ sensors will be installed in the ceiling hall areas which will be monitored alongside temperatures to help mitigate both. Because CO₂ is denser than O₂ and therefore concentrates nearer the floor than the ceiling, and occurs where people are breathing, sensors in the classroom at “breathing level” would be more effective. It should be noted that the Districts states in their FAQ the each classroom shall has a CO₂ sensor, but does not indicate when that will happen.

What do high levels of CO₂ do to people? A recent study by KPMG and Middlesex University conducted amongst 300 adults found that higher levels of CO₂ could reduce their ability to concentrate by as much as 30 per cent. ASHRAE standards for normal CO₂ levels are 700 ppm. At levels above 1,500ppm, 79 per cent of people reported feeling tired and above 2,000 ppm, nearly two thirds of participants reported having no level of concentration. 97 per cent of migraine sufferers reported symptoms at levels over 1,000ppm. (www.dofonline.co.uk/management/co2-levels-cause-office-staff-to-switch-off9283.html) Tested levels at Corona exceeded 1,000 ppm in many and 3,000 ppm in some classrooms when they were last tested in September two years ago. Dr. Jim Adams (ASU) conducted a comparison study of health issues at Corona last year which shows statistically significant higher incidences of health issues in every area assessed for students and staff. Read the full report at: www.coronacleanair.org/Adams%20Report.pdf

What do high levels of CO₂ do to buildings? High levels of CO₂ are an indicator of poor ventilation; poor ventilation inhibits resolution of moisture issues, can promote bacterial and mold growth, and slows the filtering of indoor air. Tested levels at Corona exceeded 3,000 ppm in some classrooms when they were last tested on September 25, 2006. The ADHS plans to conduct testing after students return to school, beginning the second week of classes.

Do District officials believe that Corona has a safe learning environment? While the District board and staff are clearly concerned about Corona – and have worked to obtain “emergency” funding to fix the issues – they have not notified parents that any health problem exists. On April 28, the Superintendent emailed the Coalition stating that he would notify parents by mail of health concerns. That notification never happened (see http://www.coronacleanair.org/coalition_info.html for more information). Parents of existing and incoming students should make a fully informed decision based their knowledge of the situation, on the health of their child, their doctor’s advice, and options available to them.

Was asbestos found at Corona? On May 7, 2008 pipe, pipe hangers, and roofing materials were tested for asbestos material. Asbestos testing is necessary on all materials at Corona because the 1993 comprehensive asbestos report obtained for Corona and three other district schools cannot be located, according to District officials. A complete new reassessment of those four schools has been ordered; it is not known what the cost of this is or from where the funds will come. The pipe hangers, which were found to contain asbestos, were exposed

to the outdoor walkway plenum area (ceiling tiles had been removed) through the end of school. While the reports do not specify, District officials claim that all asbestos was contained during that time. Appropriate disposal with a licensed asbestos abatement contractor was done at the end of May. While the District officials claim that the asbestos in the pipe hangers was non-friable, the test reports from Prime Consulting do not agree. A positive test for asbestos (friable) was found in 230 lineal feet of pipe hangers, and 520 square feet (non-friable) of roofing felt. (Full test available at www.coronacleanair.org)

Is the TCPTSA pursuing legal action? There are rumors that members of the Corona Clean Air Committee of the TCPTSA have initiated legal action against the District. While a few members of the committee have explored legal options to help promote the safety of staff and students, no legal action has been pursued and none is planned. The District and the Governing Board have legal representation; the TCPTSA does not.

Why does the PTSA want to have their independent consultant involved with the Arizona Department of Health Services? Members of the Corona Clean Air Committee, in an effort to promote trust and transparency with the public, hired their own indoor air quality consultants that have been instrumental in the development of the scope of the ADHS work, and have helped to narrow that scope based on preliminary bids and limited state funds available. Our goal is to have our consultants work closely with the ADHS to provide results that are beyond question and to instill confidence in parents using those results to make important decisions. The PTSA is currently soliciting tax-deductible donations to continue this effort; to date approximately \$2,500 has been spent, and we expect to spend nearly \$10,000 before the testing is complete.

How will the ventilation fix be funded? The Arizona legislature has approved a loan from the State to the TUHSD for an amount not to exceed \$12,000,000. Because the comprehensive testing of the facilities has not been completed, and the plans for the HVAC renovation are not complete, it is unclear whether that loan will cover the cost of the full fix.

What resources are there for me should I decide my child should not go to Corona? A great resource for school information is www.greatschools.net. Contact webmaster@coronacleanair.org for support from other parents who have elected to change schools until Corona has been fixed and tested, and to get information on carpooling and bus transportation to area schools from the Corona neighborhood.