

# IEQ Global Alliance

*For better indoor environment quality*



## **IEQ-GA – Presidential Column (December 2023)**

First of all, I want to offer my personal greetings to all that are celebrating holidays between now and the early part of 2024. I wish you the best for the holidays with your family, your friends and your colleagues in indoor air quality and related fields of expertise, including our colleagues from professional organizations for lighting and acoustics IEQ-GA now is truly a global alliance within the environmental and occupational health fields.

In 2023, there have been many weather-related issues worldwide that have resulted in adverse health effects due to damages to buildings and homes. The extreme weather has included record-breaking floods in Europe and North America; wildfires throughout the world with record-breaking number of wildfires in North America; elevated air temperatures throughout the world; elevated water temperatures surrounding Florida and elsewhere; and a deadly wildfire in Hawaii. There are other disasters such as earthquakes in north Africa that can result in building damages and occupant exposures to unhealthy environments. These disasters that are often related to climate change can result in long-term building repairs and restoration. These activities can lead to adverse acute and chronic health effects for the inhabitants in these areas. According to the National Institutes of Health, there are nearly 545 million individuals currently live with a chronic respiratory condition, representing 7.4% of the world's population. This provides additional evidence on the large health contribution of chronic respiratory diseases to premature morbidity and mortality.

In addition, there are potential environmental hazards in war-torn areas of the world, such as airborne contaminants and smoke, damaged storage facilities of hazardous materials, and the exposures to hazardous construction materials such as lead paint, asbestos, and mold. There are also public facilities such as power plants, manufacturing facilities, and warehouses where decaying safeguards may lead to acute airborne exposures as well as long term health problems. Due to disruption of water treatment facilities, there may be water contamination that can also lead to short- and long-term health problems among the populations in these areas. Health and assistances organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Refugee Agency, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Médecins Sans Frontières, named Doctors Without Borders in English, need our support and generosity.

There is also the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic with the emergence of new variants worldwide. According to the latest statistics from CDC regarding the United States, the number of tests that are 'positive' have gone up in the last month. In addition, the number of emergency room visits and the number of hospital visits have risen,

whereas the number of deaths due to COVID-19 remain the same <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>

The newest vaccinations that will be effective against the latest variants have become available since the end of October 2023.

It should also be noted that the number of reported infectious diseases such COVID-19, influenza, RSV and pneumonia have risen in the fall and winter during the past two years with the peaks for COVID-19 in January 2021 and 2022. Member organizations of IEQ-GA and their members can be of assistance where needed during these difficult times by providing proper and adequate information about these hazards.

One of the hazards of concern is the elevated air temperatures worldwide that have been recorded throughout the summer and now are continuing into autumn in North America, Europe, and other geographic areas of the world. The record for the world's hottest day was broken numerous times during the summer of 2023. The January–October global surface temperature ranked highest in the 174-year records at 1.13°C (2.03°F) above the 1901–2000 average of 14.1°C (57.4°F).

The heat has led to many people, particularly the elderly, becoming ill and dehydrated during their outdoor workday and over many nights. The elevated temperatures will also result in failed crops, desert conditions, and reduction in water resources. According to reliable sources, Europe and the Arctic are warming fastest, but there are many more people in parts of the Middle East, India, and East Asia that may also warm faster than the rest of the globe. As the planet grows warmer because of climate change, it will not happen evenly. IEQ-GA members as researchers and practitioners will be at the forefront of this issue worldwide.

Please note that all member organizations, as well as other related organizations, that are holding conferences in 2023-4 that are focused on IEQ issues, are invited to submit information about the conference to IEQ-GA's Secretariat. The IEQ-GA Board of Directors will review the info and then decide regarding IEQ-GA's endorsement of the conference.

If there are any efforts being undertaken by IEQ-GA's member organizations regarding the pandemic, please post an update on IEQ-GA's website under the heading 'News' so that all members can benefit from the current research, data collection, and information about Standards and Guidelines regarding the pandemic.

Personally, I want to thank the IEQ-BOD members, all of our full and affiliate members, and all of the individual members of the organizations that support the work of IEQ-GA. We are all looking forward to a bright future for IEQ-GA!

Please stay safe and healthy.

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