

# Home Renovation Checklist



## Indoor Air Quality And Your Home Renovation

Home remodeling is a chance to upgrade your appliances, replace deteriorated or poor performing systems, and possibly expand the size of your home.

It is also an excellent opportunity to create a healthier indoor environment. Today's lifestyles and air tight homes mean we often spend up to 90% of our time indoors breathing stale air. Chemicals and small particles, biological contaminants and allergens can build up inside and trigger asthma, allergies and other illnesses especially in sensitive populations.

The sources of indoor air pollution can be difficult to recognize and may come from the household materials and products we use routinely as well as our daily activities and the way our homes are built.

You may want to begin with the "Home Walk-Through Checklist," to determine potential air pollutant sources. More information on specific indoor air quality issues can be found in the "Healthy Breathing Begins at Home" Tip Sheets.

During your renovation you will also want to minimize exposure to pollutants during the renovation by using safe work techniques that follow good indoor air quality practices.

## During Remodel, Use Safe Work Practices

- Seal off the occupied space from the area under construction.
- Keep children and sensitive individuals as far from the remodeling process as possible.
- Maintain good ventilation in the work area especially when using paints, solvents, and other compounds that emit fumes. Use exhaust ventilation (eg., fan blowing out) to move air out.
- Workers should wear masks appropriate for the task or material (eg: respirator, VOC safe mask) and wear proper protection.

## Before You Begin

- Check for potential asbestos in ceilings (popcorn) and insulation (hard) prior to demolition. Call in an asbestos professional if you suspect it.
- Check and/or test for lead based paints and remediate if found.
- Check for visible moisture and molds throughout the house and on both sides of all demolished materials.
- Moisture and molds are linked. Address the source of any moisture concerns before rebuilding (eg: fix leaks, add mechanical ventilation to too tight and humid homes).
- Plan to have work done when the home is unoccupied whenever possible.
- Plan to have the work done in seasons when the house can be aired out during and after renovations, whenever possible.
- Research the options available to you to use building materials and techniques which will produce cleaner air results.
- Your house is a system. Consider how renovations made in one area of the house will affect the rest of the house. (eg: if installing a hot tub, have you made adjustments in the ventilation system for the extra humidity that may result?)
- Consider calling an energy rater for a consultation on energy efficiency and your house as a system.

## Select Products, Appliances and Services Least Likely to Cause Harm

It is difficult to completely avoid the many household products and building components that contain volatile organic compounds (VOC). In general, select natural products made of solid wood, tile, metal, and natural untreated fabrics. This checklist provides further alternatives.

- Ask for low VOC emitting paints or choose water-based paints (latex) over oil-based ones, because they emit lower levels of vapors.
- Select solid wood components with low emitting finishes.

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### During Remodel, Use Safe Work Practices - *continued*

- Temporarily cover and seal all supply and return registers in the work area so that dust, noxious fumes and other contaminants don't spread through the house.
- Minimize construction dust by using techniques such as misting surfaces with water before sanding or scraping.
- Keep materials and work area dry so moisture can't breed mold. Be prepared to clean up spills immediately.
- Make sure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working.
- Clean debris daily and make sure containers are carefully sealed after use. Dispose properly of paints, solvents and cleaning products, and other hazardous waste materials.
- When painting, installing carpets, or furniture and any products that might emit VOC's, maintain adequate ventilation during and at least 72 hours afterwards.
- Store all materials safely and away from occupants where possible; not in an attached garage.

### Select Products, Appliances and Services Least Likely to Cause Harm - *continued*

- If using pressed wood products, consider sealing surfaces with low VOC emitting sealant to reduce off-gassing.
- Use low VOC emitting sealants and finishes.
- Choose "exterior grade" pressed wood products made with phenol-formaldehyde rather than urea formaldehyde.
- Avoid carpeting where possible. Chemical treatments and synthetic compounds in carpets and pads can be irritants, and carpets harbor dust mites, molds, & bacteria.
- Pick less toxic flooring such as tile, vinyl, hardwood, and linoleum.
- If you use carpet, choose natural fibers (eg, wool) or for synthetic, 100% nylon. Look for felt padding, carpet with woven or jute backing, and fewer chemical treatments.
- Use low toxic (water-based) adhesives for flooring installation, wallpaper, and countertops.
- If replacing your heating system, consider a sealed combustion unit.
- When redecorating, select solid woods and fabrics made from natural fibers, and furniture that is easily cleaned.



1. These guidelines are for use in maintaining or renovating your home with the goal of improving the quality of the air you breathe indoors.
2. Tips for Clean Indoor Air is a set of guidelines for use in maintaining or renovating your existing home with the goal of improving the quality of the air you breathe indoors. This project is funded by Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. American Lung Association of Alaska and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation are not to be held liable and do not make any guarantees regarding the outcome of consumer implementation of these guidelines. Tips are not intended to be construed as medical advice or replace the consultation of a physician or specialist in any way.
3. For answers to lung health questions, you can speak directly with a registered nurse or respiratory therapist at no charge by calling the Call Center: 1-800-LUNGUSA

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