

Air Quality



Model Core Program Planning

The B.C. Ministry of Health has produced a Core Public Health Functions Framework. It defines and describes the core public health activities of a comprehensive public health system. The Framework provides a tool for health authorities to strengthen their public health infrastructure by reviewing their existing programs with those defined in the Framework.

Through the Core Public Health Functions Framework a model core program paper for Air Quality has been developed. This evidence-based paper will be used to determine opportunities for improving air quality in Vancouver Coastal Health. Achieving success in air quality is only possible if health authorities, local government and community partners work together.



VCH's Health Protection staff work to ensure that the air we breathe — indoors and outdoors — is clean and safe. This work is carried out in Vancouver, Richmond, North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Lions Bay, Bowen Island and includes the Sea to Sky Corridor, the Sunshine Coast, Bella Bella and Bella Coola. VCH spans 58,560 km² and contains one large airshed and a number of smaller airsheds, each with its own unique challenges.

Air Quality—Performance Improvement Planning

Using the Model Core Program Paper for air quality, a review was undertaken to identify potential areas for improving air quality services. The information from this review was used along with baseline benchmarks and best practices information to develop a performance improvement plan for Air Quality services.

Baseline Assessment

The VCH Air Quality Model Core Program Working Group reviewed current air quality activities (outdoor and indoor) to determine whether these exceed recommended best practices; meet recommended best practices or currently do not meet recommended best practices. These assessments were done in five areas of air quality:

- Outdoor Air – Surveillance and Health Impact Assessment
- Outdoor Air – Interventions
- Indoor Air – Surveillance and Health Impact Assessment
- Indoor Air – Interventions
- Education and Awareness – Indoor/Outdoor Air.

Main Opportunities for Improvement

- Improve the capacity to capture and evaluate reliable and representative air quality data.
- Evaluate the status of indoor and outdoor air quality initiatives within the health service delivery areas and centrally in order to standardize responses.
- Develop regional policies and staff training on indoor and outdoor air quality response issues to ensure consistent and quality responses in these areas.
- Improve public communication of indoor and outdoor air quality health risks.
- Collaborate with local governments to implement the provincial smoke-free indoor air legislation.

Achieving success in air quality is only possible if health authorities, local government and community partners work together.



Key Strategies

Enhance Air Quality Data Management

VCH will work with its partners in government, the not-for-profit sector (eg BC Lung Association), Provincial Health Services Authority, and others to enhance the capacity to monitor and evaluate outdoor air quality data on a more consistent and accurate basis including:

- Develop a public health approach to reporting ambient air quality and interpreting the data.
- Improve the monitoring networks in the rural and geographically diverse areas of the health authority.
- Incorporate a stronger focus on monitoring key contaminants of concern (Ozone; Hazardous Air Pollutants).
- Provide significant input into Airshed Management plans and Environmental Assessment reviews of major projects that impact air quality and the health of VCH residents.
- Supply evidence-based inputs into Air Pollution Emission permit applications.
- Establish the ability to interpret air quality trends and data through a public health impacts lens.
- Develop a strategy to advocate for climate protection initiatives at the local, provincial and federal level based on public health protection.

Review and Revise VCH Air Quality Policies & Procedures

The Health Protection Regional Council will focus on promoting a consistent approach to responding to indoor and outdoor air quality issues. The council will generate an inventory

of current HSDA and regional policies and processes related to indoor and outdoor air quality complaints. Aspects of the Inventory will include:

- A policy on the VCH response to Indoor Air Quality complaints in a variety of settings ranging from single family dwellings to institutional and other public settings.
- Increase public awareness around causes and health impacts of moisture-related issues (*ie* “mould”) in single- and multi-family dwellings.
- A policy to establish routine inspection programs and frequencies for indoor air quality within schools, daycares, recreational centres and other vulnerable facilities.
- Evaluation and possible revision to the land clearing/slash burning practices, along with enhancements to the Ventilation Index.
- Establish a method to communicate these policies throughout the Region.

Air Quality Public Education and Awareness Campaign

Health Protection will work with VCH Communications to develop a public education and awareness plan. Strategies will include:

- Update Internet with connections to AirPlay Air Quality Index and other resources.
- Develop public resources and materials on air quality impacts on health.
- Provide presentations to community stakeholders.
- Circulate news items on air quality impacts to various communications channels when appropriate.



- 50 per cent of schools, daycares, arenas and vulnerable public places will be evaluated annually against Health Canada Indoor Air Quality parameters.

And the three year targets of:

- 90 per cent of VCH communities have enhanced (beyond provincial regulation) secondhand smoke protection for public indoor and outdoor places;
- 100 per cent of critical hazards associated with Indoor Air Quality in high risk public facilities will be corrected within 30 days.

Successful implementation of an effective air quality program requires: strong support from the board and management; allocation of sufficient resources; clear mechanisms of reporting and accountability; and an opportunity to celebrate successes and achievements. The Air Quality Performance Improvement Planning process, along with the ongoing reporting and monitoring of this plan, will provide an excellent foundation for continued performance improvement.

Advance Second-hand Smoke Restrictions

- Health Protection will collaborate with community stakeholders to support local implementation of the new provincial legislation on smoking regulations..
- Advocate, sponsor and support the adoption of further smoking restrictions at the local government level aimed at entrance-ways, patios, transit shelters, sports fields and playgrounds, and other outdoor spaces frequented by children and youth.
- Support efforts to address second-hand smoke in subsidized public housing.

It is anticipated that by implementing the above strategies for improvement VCH will reach the one year performance target of:

For more information contact:

Richard Taki
Manager,
Environmental Health Division

Vancouver Coastal Health
8th Floor, 601 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4C2

Tel 604 675 3809
Fax 604 736 8651
Richard.Taki@vch.ca

Jennifer Scarr
Project Manager,
Core Public Health Services Review

Vancouver Coastal Health
301-555 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1C6

Tel 604 875 5600, Ext 62832
Fax 604 875 4041
Jennifer.Scarr@vch.ca