THE ENVIRONMENT

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) estimates about 30 percent of commercial buildings (1.4 million) in the United States may have indoor air quality (IAQ) problems. Specific chemical and biological contaminants can affect occupants' comfort and health. In many cases, poor indoor air quality is the result of inadequate ventilation and chemical emissions from multiple indoor sources.

Many factors affect IAQ, including outdoor air quality. Commercial buildings are self-contained environments, usually connected to the much larger environment by a mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system. If the outdoor air is polluted, as is the case in many areas, indoor air will also be polluted.

Good IAQ depends on solid building design, effective building operations and maintenance programs, and the appropriate selection of low-emitting interior products. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emphasizes the importance of source reduction measures, such as specifying low-emitting products and performing effective and frequent cleaning for the maintenance of acceptable indoor air quality.

Responsible manufacturers are following the EPA's recommendations by scrutinizing products that emit chemicals when used indoors and by developing ways to further reduce product emissions. Through diligent efforts to scrutinize their products, carpet manufacturers have continually tested carpet to learn about its role in indoor air quality.

CARPET'S ROLE IN THE INDOOR ENVIRONMENT

Scientific research studies, including those done by the EPA and independent laboratories, have concluded that carpet is one of the lowest emitters of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the indoor environment.

All man-made products impact indoor air. Other products, such as paint, wall coverings, and other floor coverings, emit VOC levels up to ten times higher.