

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jessica Kirby, Partners in Progress

Phone: 250-816-3671

Email: [press@pinpmagazine.org](mailto:press@pinpmagazine.org)



## Ensure air quality upgrades completed by certified workforce

When New Jersey first dispersed COVID-19 mitigation funds, some schools bought plastic fans for classroom windows. The fans brought in fresh air but made the rooms unlivable in winter.

A school in Sacramento spent millions of COVID-19 mitigation dollars on portable air filters to purify classroom air. They quickly found that teachers were turning the air filters down because the noise was drowning out discussions. Worse, each air purifier could clean only one-eighth of a classroom, so they all had to be returned.

Many other schools and businesses have made similar, disappointing purchases.

“We’ve got a once-in-a-lifetime, generational opportunity to get the funding we need to solve indoor air quality problems,” says Jeremy Zeedyk, Northeast representative for the National Energy Management Institute Committee (NEMIC). “And it’s becoming apparent that building owners and maintainers don’t know what they’re looking for.”

NEMIC is a not-for-profit organization that works with public, private, and government entities—including the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors’ National Association (SMACNA) and the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART)—to promote certification, education, and emerging market opportunities in HVAC Fire Life Safety, indoor air quality, energy efficiency, and more. Part of that education includes supervisory level training for testing adjusting and balancing (TAB), fire smoke damper testing, smoke control systems testing, indoor air quality, sound and vibration testing, and mechanical acceptance testing.

The National Energy Management Institute (NEMI)—a function of NEMIC—was investigating indoor air quality long before anyone had heard of COVID-19. In partnership with organizations like the University of California, NEMI has developed videos, sample evaluation forms, and training to help owners find real IAQ solutions. “We provide answers to help owners get the results they’re trying to achieve,” Zeedyk says. “We find that the more fresh air we bring indoors, the less disease spreads.” In fact, according to a recent study by Fondazione David Hume in Italy, just six air changes per hour reduces the transmission rate of COVID by 80%.

COVID-19 is new, but flu and other diseases shut down American schools every year. COVID-19 mitigation gives districts new tools to keep schools open. “When we use extreme measures to control a very small virus like COVID-19, it helps with particles like colds, flus, and mold spores,” Zeedyk says. “Washing your hands is good, but the biggest bang for your buck is to look at your filtration and air flows, because that limits the spread.”

The Ventilation Verification tab at *NEMIOOnline.org* includes pages of guidance to help building owners set science-based standards. The forms are open source, so they can be customized by building owners. NEMI's white paper *Design Guidance for Education Facilities* even explains the correct way to use open windows in older, unventilated classrooms. (Hint: When it gets too cold, close the windows!)

Zeedyk advises building owners to find qualified, certified professionals to perform any work. "Studies have shown that if you spend a lot of money on high performance, high efficiency equipment, but it's not installed and maintained properly, then it's not doing anything of value," he says. "It's wasting energy efficiently. Having the equipment installed and maintained by a reputable contractor that employs a skilled, trained, certified workforce is the key."

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The International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association (SMACNA) have a labor-management partnership that is more than 75 years old. The goal of these Partners in Progress is to maintain an effective cooperative effort that demonstrates their expertise in the heating ventilating and air conditioning, architectural metal, and industrial sheet metal markets. For additional information, visit *pinp.org*