

Asthmatic University Custodian Finds Cleaning Method Improves Indoor Air

Tina Enos, a custodian at [University of Michigan](#) (UM), has a personal take on the effect of poor indoor air quality (IAQ) in schools. An asthmatic, Enos regularly suffered attacks from the dust and allergens that became agitated and airborne during and after cleaning.

As a statistic, Enos is not alone. The American Lung Association has found that U.S. students miss more than 14 million school days a year because of asthma exacerbated by poor IAQ. Staff and instructors see increased sick days and lost productivity. The costs of poor IAQ can be hidden in absenteeism and reduced performance, but the effects are experienced every day in campuses across America.

An asthma sufferer often acts as a human detector for poor IAQ, which can be up to 10 times more polluted than outdoor air. Until recently, UM used traditional tools for cleaning, including Kentucky mops, upright vacuums with beater bars, and dust mops. The results of that system were in the air.

“I am a severe asthmatic, and dust is the biggest factor that can trigger an asthma attack for me,” says Enos. “Personally, I believe that the standard beater bar vacuum was an ineffective tool and threw more dust into the air than it actually picked up.”

Recently, UM began the transition to the [OS1 Cleaning System](#), a Team Cleaning® program, and started with a pilot building on campus. That building contains 100,000 square feet of cleanable space, and approximately 200 to 300 people attend classes, lectures or lab classes there daily.

When Enos heard about the new cleaning system, she jumped at the chance to be one of three janitorial volunteers to test it out. In place of her upright, she received a ProTeam® Super CoachVac®, a high-powered backpack vacuum with Four Level® Filtration, a dust capture process that traps up to 99.9 percent of particulates down to 1 micron in size—including dust mites, mold, bacteria and other allergens. A 2006 Carnegie Mellon review of five separate studies evaluating the impact of IAQ on asthma found an average asthma reduction of 38.5 percent in buildings with improved IAQ. In fact, ProTeam partners with the American Lung Association to educate the public on the importance of indoor air quality for students and building occupants.

Since the switch, Enos reports, “Asthma attacks from dust in the air have become almost nonexistent. And dust bunnies? They’re a thing of the past. Air quality, in my opinion, has improved.”

Beyond improved health, Enos has found other benefits with the ProTeam backpack. It features a lightweight frame and padded hip and waist belts, so she finds it easy to maneuver and productive to use.

“With the lightness and increased mobility of the Super CoachVac, productivity has increased significantly,” says Enos.

Though the OS1 program is new to UM, the system has been well received by coworkers, management and customers alike. Productivity is up, vacuum repairs are down dramatically, and air quality has improved.

“I believe the program will be very successful at the University,” says Enos. “I just wish I could have a ProTeam for my home. If given a choice, I will never go back to a push vacuum.”