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Contact: Jill A. Notini
Phone: (202) 872-5955
Fax: (202) 872-9354
Email: jnotini@aham.org

INDOOR AIR POLLUTANTS CREATE HOME HEALTH HAZARDS

WASHINGTON, DC (March 2001) – Had a scratchy throat lately? How about red and itchy eyes? Nose irritated? Headaches? It could be the tobacco smoke, dust or pollen floating around inside your home. Skeptical? Then read on.

The facts about indoor air quality are staggering. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that indoor air pollutants may be two to five times higher than pollutant levels outdoors. As a result, indoor air pollution is one of the top environmental concerns in the country. With Americans spending up to 90 percent of their time indoors, pollutants such as tobacco smoke, pollen, mold, dust and animal dander can create both asthmatic and allergic reactions. According to 1995 study by the Harvard School of Public Health, urban dwellers in cities where smoke stacks and traffic are heavy contributors to air quality are 15 to 17 times more likely to die prematurely than people in the cities with the cleanest air.

As a result, room air cleaners have become popular not only among asthma and allergy sufferers, but among health-conscious people as well. AHAM, the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, has created a Clean Air Delivery Rate (CADR) Seal to make the purchase of an air cleaner much easier for the consumer.

There are many different types of indoor pollution – second hand smoke, dust mites, animal dander and mold and mildew are just a few. The impact of these pollutants is magnified in today's energy conscious buildings, which keep air ventilation to a minimum to avoid heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer.

With the variety of air cleaners available, it's often a confusing process to find the right one. AHAM developed the CADR to clear up the confusion. The CADR measurement system rates each air cleaner according to the amount of clean air the product will deliver per minute in cubic feet. Ratings are shown on the seal – which appears on the side of the product package – for tobacco smoke, dust and pollen. Appropriate room sizes are also listed. CADR rated room air cleaners can remove tobacco smoke particles as small as one-tenth of a micron, and dust and pollen particles much smaller than one micron. A micron is 39 millionths of an inch – far below the size of the period ending this sentence.

By providing comparative information on the air cleaner package, CADR helps consumers make the best choice for their home and for the size of the room where the product will be used.

Room size ratings are calculated based on the removal of at least 80 percent of smoke particles in a steady-state room environment, assuming one air change per hour with complete mixing in the room.

For a copy of the Consumer Guide for Room Air Cleaners or a list of certified room air cleaners, visit the web site at www.cadr.org.

The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers is a full-service trade association representing manufacturers of major and portable appliances sold in the United States, and suppliers to the industry. All independent testing and verification for the AHAM Room Air Cleaner Certification program are provided by Intertek Testing Services (ITS), an independent laboratory under contract to AHAM.

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