



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 14, 2020  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads, Administrators of Nonpublic Schools  
Route To: Principals, School Business Administrators, Facilities Managers  
From: Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D.  
Commissioner of Education

## **New Jersey Department of Health Guidance for Evaluation and Management of Mercury-Containing Floors in New Jersey Schools**

The purpose of this memo is to disseminate [guidance](#) published by the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) regarding evaluation and management of mercury-containing floors in New Jersey schools. Please see the summary information below provided by the NJDOH.

### **Background**

Between the 1960s and early 2000s, a number of companies manufactured and installed mercury-containing flooring systems in school gymnasiums and all-purpose rooms around the United States. This flooring was installed using a catalyst known as phenylmercuric acetate, which helps produce a solid, rubber-like floor. Studies have shown that over time, some of these flooring systems may emit mercury vapor into the indoor air under certain conditions.

It is important to note that not all synthetic flooring contains mercury, and that not all flooring that contains mercury emits mercury vapor into the air. In schools that do have mercury-containing flooring systems that emit mercury into the air, the level of mercury vapor in the air varies and is dependent on factors such as temperature, ventilation, and the condition of the floor.

### **Key steps/actions**

This guidance document provides a systematic approach for school districts and their environmental consultants to evaluate whether installed mercury-containing flooring systems emit mercury vapors in excess of NJDOH's recommended maximum contaminant level of 0.8 micrograms per cubic meter of air. This maximum contaminant level is based on NJDOH's regulatory risk assessment model that can be used to evaluate indoor air contaminants for school children and staff (*N.J.A.C. 8:50*). It is protective of preschool-aged children and is based on an exposure frequency of eight hours per day for 180 days. This is the level of mercury in indoor air at which NJDOH does not expect any harmful health effects among children as young as age 3.

The New Jersey Department of Education strongly encourages districts to review this guidance and closely follow its assessment, sampling and risk-mitigation protocol should the district determine to undergo evaluation for the presence of mercury.

Questions concerning this guidance should be directed to:

New Jersey Department of Health  
Environmental and Occupational Health Surveillance Program  
Consumer, Environmental and Occupational Health Services  
P.O. Box 369  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0369

School administrators and their environmental consultants can reach the NJDOH via the [Contact Us webpage](#).

Parents and other community stakeholders should contact their [local school district](#).

c: Members, State Board of Education  
NJDOE Staff  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group