



Environmental News

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**EPA ADMINISTRATOR WHITMAN, REPRESENTATIVE MORELLA APPLAUD
MARYLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR EXCELLENCE
IN IMPROVING INDOOR AIR QUALITY**

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As part of her ongoing efforts to heighten awareness about Children's Health Month, EPA Administrator Christie Whitman today joined U.S. Representative Connie Morella in celebrating the efforts of Montgomery County, Md. schools to implement the "Tools For Schools" program. During an event at Fallsmead Elementary School in Rockville, Md., Whitman and Morella cited the strong work accomplished by Montgomery County in its schools to improve indoor air quality and to heighten awareness of indoor air quality issues. Montgomery County has been cited as a National Leader in this program and has been the recipient of an Excellence Award for their work.

Noting that more than 50 million children in the United States attend elementary and secondary schools, Whitman said, "Our schools should be havens for children – providing them with a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment where they can learn and grow. There are a multitude of ways that schools can improve indoor air quality." She continued, "EPA developed the Tools for Schools program to give schools the guidance they need to identify improvements that can be made, such as ensuring ventilation systems are operating efficiently and outlining proper maintenance procedures."

Through Tools For Schools, EPA works with school districts across the nation to promote adoption of programs to improve indoor air quality in their building by raising awareness of school officials, nurses, teachers, facility managers, parents and others about indoor air quality and the potential negative effect poor indoor air quality can have on our children's health. Many of the measures Tools for Schools promotes yield dramatic air improvement results and are affordable to implement. The Fallsmead Elementary School in Rockville is one of the many schools that have successfully utilized Tools for Schools, in their case by starting a preventive maintenance program to the heating ventilation air conditioning system, achieving measurable improvements in air quality.

Children spend an average of eight hours a day in school. Pollutants inside classrooms and other indoor school facilities are often two- to five- times higher than outdoor levels, which can trigger asthma attacks. Asthma in young children has risen by nearly 60 percent in the last 15 years and is responsible for 10 million missed school days per year.

For more information on EPA's Tools For Schools program, see: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/>.