

U of A works with Health Canada to test residential indoor air quality

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Researchers at the University of Alberta are trying to help clear the air about the levels of air pollutants in people's homes.

"This is pretty important because almost two-thirds of our lifetime is spent inside our home," said Warren Kindzierski, associate professor from the School of Public Health.

The U of A's School of Public Health has been asked by Health Canada to help with a Residential Indoor [Air Quality](#) Study.

"Very simply, a study like this gives us answers about what are causes of poor air quality and provides us insights about what we can do to maintain good [indoor air](#) quality," said Kindzierski.

Throughout 2010, 50 Edmonton homes are being tested in winter and summer. This is part of a larger Canada-wide study that has been conducted over the past five years involving residences in Halifax, Quebec city, Windsor and Regina.

"We are testing for a number of combustion pollutants such as [carbon monoxide](#), formaldehyde, inhalable dust, volatile organic compounds and other factors that affect the quality of indoor air," said Kindzierski.

Homeowners who agree to take part in the study will have nine visits from co-op students from the Faculty of Engineering.

During the visits indoor and outdoor air quality monitors are installed and house dust is collected. Each day the homeowners are asked to fill out a questionnaire about their daily activities.

"We were asked questions about cooking, like if we use a toaster and how many times a day," said Pat Stagg, an Edmonton homeowner who agreed to take part in the study. "They also wanted to know if we use any appliances with a motor such as a blender or a mixer."

Pat and her husband Keith say they're curious to find out about the possible pollutants in their 49 year-old-home.

"This research will say if the levels are safe in our home," said Pat.

Homeowners like the Staggs will be given a report about their home with suggestions about what they can do to improve the air quality.

Ultimately the information gathered in this study will be used over the next few years to update Health Canada's Residential Indoor Air Quality Guidelines.

Provided by University of Alberta

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