

Why Choosing the Right Industrial Hygienist Matters - And What Happens When You Don't



The Role of an industrial Hygienist

An Industrial Hygienist (IH) is a specialized environmental health professional trained to identify, evaluate, and control hazards that can impact the health and safety of people in homes, workplaces, and other built environments. When it comes to indoor air quality (IAQ) and mold concerns, an IH plays a critical role in maintaining a healthy environment. Using scientific testing methods and data-driven analysis, they determine what contaminants are present in the air, why they're there, and how to effectively address the problem. Their findings not only help pinpoint sources of poor air quality, such as hidden moisture, mold growth, or ventilation issues, but also guide property owners toward targeted, evidence-based solutions that protect building occupants and prevent costly long-term damage.

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Qualified hygienists:

- Conduct air, surface, and bulk sampling using calibrated, industry-standard methodologies.
- Assess humidity, temperature, ventilation, and particulate concentrations to evaluate environmental conditions.
- Identify contaminants including mold spores, bacteria, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and allergens.
- Determine the source of contamination, whether originating from HVAC systems, condensation, or roof intrusions.
- Produce comprehensive, defensible reports that include clear, actionable recommendations.

Their work extends beyond data collection—it provides insight. A proficient hygienist analyzes results within context, articulates potential risks in clear, professional terms, and presents informed, practical solutions for remediation and prevention.

Why It's So Important to Choose Carefully

It might seem like any environmental testing firm can collect air samples and send them to a lab. But the difference between a qualified industrial hygienist and an inexperienced tester can be the difference between solving a problem—or creating a bigger one.

Here's why the right choice matters:

1. Accuracy and Credibility
2. Improper sampling techniques, poor chain of custody, or contaminated collection tools can render results meaningless. A professional hygienist knows where, how, and when to test—and uses accredited labs (AIHA or ISO 17025 certified) for analysis. Their findings hold up under scrutiny from insurers, attorneys, or regulatory agencies.
3. Should tenants or employees file a complaint about air quality or health symptoms, having credible, third-party testing documentation is your best defense. Reports from certified industrial hygienists demonstrate that you acted responsibly, investigated professionally, and followed proper protocols.
4. Long-Term Cost Control
5. A skilled hygienist doesn't just identify what's wrong—they identify why it happened. Addressing root causes like humidity imbalance, ventilation deficiencies, or HVAC condensation prevents repeat problems. Cheap testing often overlooks these details, setting you up for recurring costs and frustrated occupants.

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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Steve Weldon

ESTIMATOR

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I enjoy the problem-solving aspect of estimating, but what I value most is the team. Having a strong, collaborative group around me makes a big difference. Everyone's willingness to share knowledge and support one another not only makes the work better but also makes it more rewarding.

How has your time at PBI been for you so far?

My time at PBI has been both engaging and growth-oriented. I've had the chance to work on a wide variety of projects—each one different in size, scope, and complexity. The collaborative culture here really makes a difference, and I appreciate being surrounded by people who are committed to quality work.

What's a project accomplishment you're particularly proud of?

One project I'm especially proud of is Andrew's Hall. It was my first awarded project here at PBI, and it went smoothly from start to finish. I was happy with the approach I took, the contractor coverage we had, and ultimately the strong profit return.



What advice would you give someone starting in a similar role or joining the PBI team?

Take the time to understand the details, ask questions early, and don't be afraid to lean on the knowledge of your coworkers. Estimating is all about building a strong foundation—if you start with clear and accurate information, the rest of the process goes much more smoothly. And take the time to become friendly with subcontractors. Building those relationships not only helps grow our network but also ensures stronger, more competitive coverage.

Outside of work, what are some of your hobbies, or something interesting about yourself that nobody at work knows?

Outside of work, I coach high school football, which combines my passion for sports, leadership, and teaching. I also enjoy fitness—running, lifting, and Peloton workouts are all part of my routine. I also really enjoy smoking and grilling food—pulled pork is a favorite.

What Can Go Wrong When You Don't Hire the Right Expert

Skipping proper testing, or hiring an unqualified “inspector”, can create a ripple effect of problems across your facility, finances, and reputation.

1. Misdiagnosis and Unnecessary Remediation

Untrained testers often rely on over-the-counter kits or random air samples. These can produce false positives or misleading results that trigger unnecessary panic—or unnecessary spending. Imagine tearing out drywall and flooring because of a misread sample when the real issue was simply poor ventilation.

2. Unresolved Health Complaints

If the source isn't accurately identified, the problem persists. Tenants or staff may continue to experience symptoms like headaches, coughing, or fatigue. In some cases, they may report your building as “sick,” damaging trust and potentially inviting regulatory scrutiny.

3. Failed Clearance Testing

When remediation is performed without a qualified hygienist's pre- and post-testing plan, it often fails final clearance testing—wasting time, disrupting operations, and doubling costs.

4. Lost Insurance Claims or Legal Exposure

Insurers and attorneys rely on verified environmental data to make determinations. A poorly documented or non-accredited report may be rejected, leaving you responsible for the entire cost of remediation or damages. In serious cases, you could face negligence claims for failing to provide a safe environment.



The Hidden Costs of Cutting Corners

Hiring an unqualified tester can lead to costly mistakes, wasted budgets on unnecessary remediation, delays due to failed clearance testing, and damage to your credibility if health issues persist. Legal and insurance troubles are also more likely with poor documentation.

Protect your investment and reputation, call PBI at 1-888-PBI-1988 or scan the QR code below to connect with our team for expert guidance.



How to Choose the Right Industrial Hygienist

The best defense is doing your homework before hiring. Here's what to look for when vetting candidates:

1. Certification and Credentials

- Seek professionals certified by reputable organizations such as CIH, CIEC, or CAC.
- Always confirm current certification status.

2. Laboratory Accreditation

- Ask where samples will be analyzed. -
- Reputable hygienists use AIHA-LAP or ISO 17025-accredited labs.

3. Independence

- Ensure the hygienist is not affiliated with a remediation contractor.

4. Experience and References

- Ask for project references similar to your building type.

5. Clear, Understandable Reporting

- A professional should explain findings and recommendations in plain English.



Steps to Take When Air Quality or Mold Issues Arise

1. Document complaints and conditions.
2. Address moisture first.
3. Engage a certified industrial hygienist early.
4. Follow their sampling plan.
5. Review the full report carefully.
6. Use findings to guide remediation.
7. Implement preventive measures after remediation.

The Bottom Line

When it comes to indoor air quality and mold testing, cutting corners can cost far more in the long run. The right industrial hygienist delivers accuracy, credibility, and protection for your building, your people, and your reputation.

At PBI, we partner with certified professionals to ensure every assessment is handled with precision and integrity. Our team provides rapid response, clear communication, and proven solutions—so you can move forward with confidence.

If you suspect poor air quality or mold in your facility, don't wait until it becomes a costly issue. Contact PBI today at 1-888-PBI-1988 or visit www.pbicommercial.com



Always On, Always Ready: Secure Priority Access for Emergencies

Emergencies don't wait for a convenient time. Water damage, storms, and urgent building problems can strike any day, holidays included. PBI's commercial construction and restoration teams stay fully staffed throughout the season, with our emergency response crew available 24/7/365.

Prepare for the Unexpected: Stay One Step Ahead

Don't get caught unprepared. Setting up a Priority Access account takes just minutes and puts you at the front of the line when every second counts.

Why Set Up Today?

- **Faster Response:** We're ready to dispatch as soon as you call.
- **Less Downtime:** Quick service means less interruption and reduced costs.
- **Guaranteed Priority:** Immediate attention during emergencies.

Stay prepared. Set up Priority Access today to ensure help is just a call away when it matters most.



Scan to set up your
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Virginia Science Museum Case Study



Overview

The Commonwealth of Virginia initiated urgent exterior repairs at the historic Science Museum of Virginia to address critical issues, including water infiltration, failing steel windows, deteriorated glazing, and worn architectural elements. The goal was to halt active deterioration while preserving the building's historic character.

Challenges

The project faced two key challenges: rapidly progressing damage and the need to complete repairs without disrupting museum operations. Additionally, preserving as much of the original materials as possible was a top priority.

Approach

A phased and collaborative plan was implemented, focusing first on stopping water intrusion. This was followed by targeted restoration of steel windows, replacement of deteriorated glazing, and repairs to doors, trim, and the canopy. Close coordination among the Commonwealth, museum staff, and contractors ensured the project remained efficient and visitor-friendly.

Results

The repairs were completed ahead of schedule, successfully preserving the building's historic character while enhancing its durability and curb appeal. Future structural and water-related issues were significantly mitigated.

Outcome

This preservation-driven effort reinforced the Science Museum of Virginia as a cherished Richmond landmark, ensuring its protection and appeal for generations to come.