

InspectAPedia.com - Odor Identification and Source Checklist

<u>InspectAPedia.com</u> Odor Checklist © 2010 InspectAPedia.com <u>ODOR DIAGNOSIS CHECKLIST</u> – online fulltext version of this document For In-Depth Odor Diagnosis & Remedy Information see these Internet Articles: Home Page on Odor Diagnosis: ODORS, Smells, Gases in Buildings-Diagnosis & Cure Keep an Odor Log: use this Odor Log Spreadsheet or Odor Log printer-friendly file to record your odor observations for further analysis.				
Odor Cause Diagnosis Questions	Odor Diagnosis Variables	Comments & More Help at InspectAPedia.com		
Odors in boats, cars, campers, trucks	<input type="checkbox"/> Water leak at window, door, trunk <input type="checkbox"/> Carpeting has been wet <input type="checkbox"/> Seats have been wet <input type="checkbox"/> Headliner has been wet	See BOAT & CAR SMELLS & ODORS		
Odors & Building Structure: does the odor relate to presence of a nearby air movement pathway	<input type="checkbox"/> Building stairwell <input type="checkbox"/> Heating and cooling duct system?			
Odors & Building height, use, occupancy: does the odor relate to the level in the building to:	<input type="checkbox"/> Windows open when odor is present <input type="checkbox"/> Windows shut when odor is present <input type="checkbox"/> Stairwell present? <input type="checkbox"/> Elevator present? <input type="checkbox"/> Odors relate to elevator usage? <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking odors	Odors may move among building levels via elevator shafts, stairwells, elevator movement		
Odor Character: Describe the odor and its strength: <i>Also see Odors & Paints, below.</i>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> chemical, <input type="checkbox"/> flue gases, <input type="checkbox"/> fuel gas, <input type="checkbox"/> heating oil, <input type="checkbox"/> sewer gas </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> rotten egg, <input type="checkbox"/> mold, <input type="checkbox"/> musty, <input type="checkbox"/> plastic, <input type="checkbox"/> food <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ </td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> chemical, <input type="checkbox"/> flue gases, <input type="checkbox"/> fuel gas, <input type="checkbox"/> heating oil, <input type="checkbox"/> sewer gas	<input type="checkbox"/> rotten egg, <input type="checkbox"/> mold, <input type="checkbox"/> musty, <input type="checkbox"/> plastic, <input type="checkbox"/> food <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____	See MOLD ODORS, Musty Smells in Buildings See SEWER GAS ODORS and SEWER GAS ODORS in COLD WEATHER
<input type="checkbox"/> chemical, <input type="checkbox"/> flue gases, <input type="checkbox"/> fuel gas, <input type="checkbox"/> heating oil, <input type="checkbox"/> sewer gas	<input type="checkbox"/> rotten egg, <input type="checkbox"/> mold, <input type="checkbox"/> musty, <input type="checkbox"/> plastic, <input type="checkbox"/> food <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____			

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<p>Odors & Electrical Wiring: a smell of burning plastic may be associated with potentially dangerous overheating of electrical components, wire insulation, plastic receptacles or light switches. If you smell "burning plastic" or similar odors indoors or even outside of a building, a dangerous electrical failure could be present.</p>	<p>Describe smell: _____</p> <p>Location of smell: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum electrical wiring? <input type="checkbox"/> FPE Stab-Lok or Zinsco electrical panel? <input type="checkbox"/> Electric heat? <input type="checkbox"/> SAFETY - HAVE YOU TURNED OFF OFFENDING CIRCUIT? If not DO SO immediately.</p>		<p>Turn off any suspicious or malfunctioning electrical circuits immediately, install smoke detectors, call your fire department, and hire an electrician familiar with aluminum wiring. See ALUMINUM WIRING HAZARDS, FPE Stab-Lok</p>
<p>Odors & Fans: while exhaust fans are often used to move odors out of a building, an investigation may be in order:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the exhaust fan or whole house fan or attic roof vent fan cause odors, dust, or even mold to move upwards through the building?</p>		
<p>Odors & Fireplaces: Type of fireplaces (gas, wood, coal)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Odor when fireplace in use? <input type="checkbox"/> Damper open or shut? <input type="checkbox"/> Type of fuel?</p>		<p>Also see CHIMNEY INSPECTION & REPAIR GUIDE</p>
<p>Odors & Heating Equipment or other Appliances does the odor appear only when certain appliances are running</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Stove/oven <input type="checkbox"/> heater <input type="checkbox"/> fans <input type="checkbox"/> TV's <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> aquarium <input type="checkbox"/> air conditioner <input type="checkbox"/> clothes dryer <input type="checkbox"/> clothes washers <input type="checkbox"/> dishwashers</p>	<p>See chimney backdrafting, leaks, and odors from flues, CARBON MONOXIDE hazards Natural Gas Combustion Products and also LP & Natural Gas Safety Hazards. Also see CHIMNEY INSPECTION & REPAIR GUIDE</p>
<p>Heating Oil fired equipment?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Related to oil fired equipment? <input type="checkbox"/> Gas fired equipment? <input type="checkbox"/> Present in or near ductwork?</p>		<p>See OIL HEAT ODORS & see OIL TANK LEAK ODORS See DUCT & AIR HANDLER ODORS</p>

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<p>LP or Natural Gas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Gas odors present? <input type="checkbox"/> Gas leaks at appliances, piping, regulators, or incoming gas line? <input type="checkbox"/> Contacted gas company, fire department? 	<p>See chimney backdrafting, leaks, and odors from flues, CARBON MONOXIDE hazards Natural Gas Combustion Products and also LP & Natural Gas Safety Hazards. Also see CHIMNEY INSPECTION & REPAIR GUIDE</p>
<p>Odor history When was the odor first noticed? For how long has it been observed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Date first observed: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Who first observed it? <input type="checkbox"/> Was this related to any event? <input type="checkbox"/> To any building modification? <input type="checkbox"/> To any change in the building? <input type="checkbox"/> Dates odor is present or absent? 	<p>Explain:</p>
<p>Events that may relate to Odor:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> an event that involved an unusual number of occupants <input type="checkbox"/> Change, service, or replacement of HVAC equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Events, such as a fire or flood <input type="checkbox"/> Modifications: additions, construction, window replacements, installation of insulation or change in building ventilation system or plumbing system or fixtures <input type="checkbox"/> Pets added to the building <input type="checkbox"/> Purchases: of new furnishings, carpeting, draperies, blinds <input type="checkbox"/> Weather, heavy snowstorms, other weather related events, possibly recurrent or cyclical 	

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<p>Odors & indirect odor sources Ex: the ability of heating and cooling ducts to pick up odors from one location and transport them to another in the building, through the ductwork.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there any indirect source the odor could originate from?	
<p>Odor location</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> does the odor appear throughout the building <input type="checkbox"/> on certain floors, <input type="checkbox"/> in certain rooms, <input type="checkbox"/> at certain walls?	<p>See SMELL PATCH TEST to Track Down Odors</p>
<p>What is different about the room where an odor appears:</p>		
<p>What side of the building is the room on?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> North <input type="checkbox"/> East	<input type="checkbox"/> South <input type="checkbox"/> West
<p>What conditions are different there</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> sun exposure <input type="checkbox"/> wind exposure <input type="checkbox"/> nearby trees <input type="checkbox"/> prevalent wind direction <input type="checkbox"/> outdoor possible odor sources?	
<p>What side of the room, what wall, has the strongest odor:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> exterior wall <input type="checkbox"/> Interior wall	

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<p>What materials are unique to the odor-source room</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> carpets <input type="checkbox"/> carpet padding <input type="checkbox"/> drapes, window shades <input type="checkbox"/> type and age of windows <input type="checkbox"/> screens <input type="checkbox"/> heat, air conditioning <input type="checkbox"/> pet occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> people occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> laundry storage <input type="checkbox"/> proximity to baths, kitchens, laundry <input type="checkbox"/> openings between floors? 	
<p>What is different about the floor or level in a building where odors occur?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to basements, <input type="checkbox"/> attics, <input type="checkbox"/> leaks, <input type="checkbox"/> rodents, pests, <input type="checkbox"/> animals, <input type="checkbox"/> heating equipment, <input type="checkbox"/> pesticide treatments 	
<p>Does the odor appear related to specific equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> heating or cooling system ductwork or air handlers <input type="checkbox"/> Does it occur only when certain equipment is operating? 	
<p>Odors & Mold: moldy smells or odors present? Mold odors are generally MVOCs - these gases are produced inconsistently, not by all molds, and not under all conditions;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> visible mold in the building? <input type="checkbox"/> history of building leaks? <input type="checkbox"/> Humidity levels exceeded? 	<p>Mold or "mildew" odor production may vary by indoor conditions such as temperature, humidity, light, darkness, even season or mechanical disturbance of moldy materials. See MOLD ODORS, Musty Smells in Buildings. Also see Volatile Organic Compounds VOCs. See MOLD ODORS, Musty Smells in Buildings</p>

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<p>Odors & neighbors: does the odor correlate with activities by building occupants or building neighbors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> trash burning, <input type="checkbox"/> level of septic system usage, <input type="checkbox"/> use of woodstoves, coal stoves, <input type="checkbox"/> home improvements, building projects, <input type="checkbox"/> cooking, wine making. 	
<p>Odors & occupants: does the odor occur when the building is occupied by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> large number of people <input type="checkbox"/> visitors? <input type="checkbox"/> specific individuals? 	
<p>Odors & paints: paints, both exterior and interior are odor sources some high VOC paints may continue to outgas VOCs at low levels for years after initial application</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> How long ago was paint last applied? <input type="checkbox"/> Where? <input type="checkbox"/> Type of Paint: 	<p>See MOLD ODORS, Musty Smells in Buildings. Also see Volatile Organic Compounds VOCs.</p>
<p>Odor perceivers: who notices the smells?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Odor perceived only by certain occupants <input type="checkbox"/> Odor noticeable to all occupants <input type="checkbox"/> Odor noticed by occasional visitors <input type="checkbox"/> Medical checkup – consulted with doctor 	<p>Some medical conditions can affect smell perception or can cause odor hallucinations</p>
<p>Odors & Pets or other Animals in Buildings: what is the history of animals and pets occupying the building?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Animal pests such as rodents: mice, squirrels, raccoons, insects, who may <input type="checkbox"/> Animal urine or fecal waste on building surfaces, <input type="checkbox"/> Dead animals in walls or ceilings. 	<p>See Pet Odor Removal and see Building Inspection & Test Procedures for Pet Allergens.</p>
<p>Odors & Plumbing:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does the odor presence relate to the use or dis-use of plumbing fixtures in the building? <input type="checkbox"/> Does heavy usage bring out the odor problem? 	<p>Problems with the building drain-waste-vent piping, leaks, and even loose toilets are common sources of sewer gases, septic odors, and even "rotten egg" odors in buildings. See ODORS IN WATER for smells in drinking water or showers. See SEWER GAS ODORS and SEWER GAS ODORS in COLD WEATHER</p>

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Odor strength	<input type="checkbox"/> is the odor perceived as strong or mild? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the level of smell vary? <input type="checkbox"/> Under what conditions?	
Odors & time of occurrence: does the odor appear all of the time or only at certain times.	<input type="checkbox"/> All the time <input type="checkbox"/> Only at certain times	
If Only at Certain Times: does the odor correlate to any of the following?	<input type="checkbox"/> Time of day, <input type="checkbox"/> sunlight, <input type="checkbox"/> operation of heating or cooling equipment	
Time of year, season, foliage, outdoor or indoor activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Note any correlations to these.	See CARBON MONOXIDE & GAS HEAT ODORS
Odors & local temperature Does the odor appear or disappear in relation to changes in building temperature?	<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, explain:	
Sunlight striking plastic window screens may make a distinctive odor only on the sunlit side of the building Plumbing system drains or vent systems may release odors when a private septic system is under heavy use or in certain weather conditions	<input type="checkbox"/> Do either of these conditions apply to the odor?	See SEWER GAS ODORS and SEWER GAS ODORS in COLD WEATHER
Odors & weather conditions does the odor correlate with weather conditions:	<input type="checkbox"/> Humidity <input type="checkbox"/> temperature, <input type="checkbox"/> rain, <input type="checkbox"/> snow, <input type="checkbox"/> wind? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the odor or smell correlate with heavy snow-cover?	
Special thanks to reader Kathleen Black for initial preparation and suggestion of use of this odor checklist. © 2010 InspectAPedia.com		

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