



# Choosing a Safe Location for Child Care

## CHOOSE SAFE PLACES - AVOID HARMFUL ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES

Selecting the right location for your child care business is essential for success. There's more to consider than cost and classroom size – what about the safety of the location and building? Minimize the risk to your business by carefully considering the environmental health factors described below, all of which can have an impact on the wellbeing of the children in your care.



## Property Use and Environmental Contamination

### ✓ Learn about the former property use

Contaminants may have been left behind due to some former property uses, such as:

- dry cleaners
- auto body shops
- gas stations
- manufacturing or industrial uses

Learning about former property uses helps identify when further investigation may be needed to rule out harmful environmental exposures. Search for information related to prior ownership of the property to find out whether any businesses could have used or disposed of hazardous contaminants. Find out whether environmental site assessments exist for the property (such as a Phase I or Phase II).

### ✓ Learn about nearby environmental contamination

Tenant spaces that share walls with other businesses using chemicals may have their indoor air quality affected. Dry cleaners and nail salons are common examples of commercial businesses that may affect adjacent spaces, particularly if they are located in a strip mall with shared HVAC systems.

In some places, chemicals used in the past have polluted soil and groundwater. Chemicals that evaporate can create chemical vapors underground. These vapors can move and come in contact with buildings and contaminate indoor air. This process – when pollution moves from air spaces in soil to indoor air – is called vapor intrusion. Nearby current and former property uses, and nearby known contaminated sites can provide clues about the potential for vapor intrusion to affect a location.

## Helpful resources to learn about former property uses and nearby contamination

- Talk to the current property owner.
- Use online mapping tools to identify nearby property uses and search the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's online tool, [What's in My Neighborhood \(www.pca.state.mn.us/data/whats-my-neighborhood\)](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/data/whats-my-neighborhood)
- Request assistance to find documents from the city/local government agencies.
- Look around the location of interest. Visible property and building attributes could suggest former or current use that may warrant follow-up.
- Contact MDH (see reverse side) for assistance in screening a prospective property.

## Additional Environmental Health Considerations



### ✓ Test drinking water for lead

Lead is a poisonous metal that can cause long-term health and behavioral problems. All drinking water should be tested for lead, since lead can leach from plumbing systems and faucet fixtures.

[Lead in Drinking Water \(PDF\)](#)

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/contaminants/leadfactsht.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/contaminants/leadfactsht.pdf)



### ✓ Test well water for other contaminants

The only way to know if well water is safe, especially for young children, is to have it tested. MDH recommends testing for bacteria, nitrate, manganese, and arsenic.

[Well Water Testing Program](#)

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/cspwelltest.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/cspwelltest.html)



### ✓ Test for radon

Radon is a radioactive gas that occurs naturally in certain areas underground. You can't see or smell radon and it can accumulate when it enters through a building's foundation. Breathing radon may lead to lung cancer.

[Radon Testing](#)

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/air/radon/radontestresults.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/air/radon/radontestresults.html)



### ✓ Prevent lead paint exposure

Lead-based paint is a common source of lead exposure. Many buildings built before 1978 have lead-based paint. Lead exposure in young children can cause learning and behavioral problems.

[Common Sources of Lead](#)

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/lead/fs/common.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/lead/fs/common.html)



### ✓ Control environmental triggers of asthma

Does the building have good indoor air quality? Allergens and irritants include mold, dust mites, strong odors or fumes, second-hand smoke.

[Know Your Asthma Triggers](#)

[www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/asthma/managing/triggers.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/asthma/managing/triggers.html)

## Questions or Need More Information? Contact MDH

Site Screening Program - Choose Safe Places Minnesota

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/cspsitescreen.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/cspsitescreen.html)

Phone: 651-201-4897 or 1-800-657-3908 | Email: [health.hazard@state.mn.us](mailto:health.hazard@state.mn.us)