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Comments on Developing Standardized Tools for Assessing Employees Ratings of Facility Performance by Daniel Stokols and Frederick Scharf

REFERENCE: Dufour, Larry G., "Comments on 'Developing Standardized Tools for Assessing Employees Ratings of Facility Performance' by Daniel Stokols and Frederick Scharf", *ASTM STP 1029, Performance of Buildings and Serviceability of Facilities*, Gerald Davis and Francis T. Ventre, eds., American Society for Testing and Materials, Philadelphia, 1990.

I am employed by Environment Canada. This is a Department of the Canadian government. Its role is to minimize the threats and optimize benefits arising from interactions between society and the environment.

My responsibilities are to make certain that the various operational units of corporate headquarters have well designed, comfortable and clean premises in which to perform the functions which they have been assigned.

Environment Canada have made use of survey instruments prior to fitting out or re-fitting accommodation. We have not used survey instruments for the purpose described in Daniel Stokols and Ted Scharf's paper, namely, to determine if changes were warranted to improve the satisfaction, health and productivity of employees. Regrettably, buildings are regarded as cost centers in our Department and not as crucial corporate assets that warrant investment and cultivation - as tools for achieving both short and long term organizational goals.

The corporate headquarters of Environment Canada is housed in two multi-storey premises in Hull, Quebec. These premises are sublet from Public Works Canada, the government agency which provides accommodation to all departments of government.

Our preoccupation while occupying these premises has primarily been with the health of our employees. In one premise in particular, a number of very serious health problems have occurred. The symptoms experienced were fatigue, allergic reactions and respiratory problems. Extensive studies were carried out and major modifications made to the ventilating systems, including their management. The majority of air tests carried out met local and national codes. We have never been capable of precisely identifying what it was, i.e. what kinds of emissions, that caused so many to be affected and some in a chronic fashion.

SUMMARY

Therefore, there is one aspect of facility performance with which we are preoccupied; those conditions which have caused many employees to be drastically ill, and be absent from the workplace for extended periods. Many additional employees are coping with the situation, but admittedly their productivity has been affected. We are interested in a better means of documenting these conditions and we are particularly interested in finding out if the technology exists to identify what it is, precisely, that is affecting the health of our employees. The short term effect has been apparent. What are the medium to longer term prospects?

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