



Episode 678 | October 14, 2022 | 12:00 PM EST

## Mark Ames

AIHA Director, Government Relations  
**White House Summit on IAQ Takeaways**

This week we welcomed Mark Ames, AIHA Director, Government Relations to discuss the recent White House Summit on IAQ. Mark was there and we attempted to distill the essence of the 3.5 hour summit into our show. For the full video of the event go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1HCG1aXaBg>

Since 2003, Mark has led the government relations activities of major national and global nonprofit associations, representing educators, school leaders, engineers, and workplace and community health and safety professionals. Mark currently serves as the head of government relations for AIHA, where he works with legislators, regulators, nonprofits, and leaders at some of the world's largest companies to identify and solve critical problems facing businesses, workers, and communities throughout the nation.

Mark is the Vice-chair ASAE's Government Relations and Advocacy Professionals Advisory Council, serves on the Board of Directors for the [Re]build America's School Infrastructure Coalition, and is the author of *The 30-Minute Leader: Your Guide to Influence, Power, and Transformation*, available on at <https://30minuteleader.com/>

### **Nuggets mined from today's episode:**

Mark Ames is a native of Binghamton, NY. He has been working in DC since 2003. Mark began his work with IAQ while representing the National Association of Secondary School Principals, where he served on the Board of Directors for the Committee for Education Funding and became an Education Policy Fellow. Mark then worked for ASHRAE for seven years and has been at AIHA for six years.

After reviewing the event agenda and speakers list, Mark was intrigued by the White House Summit on IAQ and saw it as an opportunity to learn more about what the government was thinking and planning regarding IAQ. Mark agreed with Summit attendees who argued that this IAQ moment can be turned into a movement and that focus is required to maintain momentum.

#### Dr. Ashish Jha - White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator

- Pre-pandemic, holidays are a stressful time for hospitals due to influenza.
- Influenza and Covid are not going away.
- How will hospitals manage respiratory disease? The best option is to lower the burden of respiratory infection.
- The administration considers IAQ important.
- Building owners should have healthy buildings.
- The administration is showcasing buildings and businesses.
- The benefits of healthy buildings need to be visualized.

#### Mark Ames' Responds:

- Dr. Jha is an inspiring speaker who set the tone for the meeting.
- This is an important moment and the White House's leadership will be key. Many people and organizations – including AIHA, will be closely watching and working with the White House on next steps
- It is beneficial that the medical community is tied into IAQ.

#### Dr. Joseph Allen - Harvard University

- What can move the needle on IAQ?

#### Outlined 4 Healthy Building Strategies:

1. Tune-up our buildings.
  2. Maximize fresh air ventilation.
  3. Improve filtration to MERV 13 (minimum)
  4. Supplement with portable air cleaners
- Indoor air has more impact on your health than your doctor.
  - We should take the pulse of our buildings regularly.
  - Indoor air monitoring with low cost sensors should be the standard. Sensors should be as visible as thermostats.

### Mark Ames' Takeaways:

- Passionate high-energy speaker.
- We need a definition for good indoor air quality.
- CO<sup>2</sup> is a proxy for indoor air quality.
- People want a dashboard, a number or red and green lights to indicate the status of IAQ.
- What needs to be done when the red light comes on?
- What are the metrics of IAQ?
- What is the government policy on IAQ?
- What are we trying to change?

### Jesus Jara - Clark County Schools

- Academic performance and health are tied to IAQ.
- We don't question the demand for water quality. When water isn't crystal clear we know something is wrong.
- We can't see what's wrong with the air.
- We need a warning system to initiate action due to poor IAQ, so schools can be closed and remediated.

### Mark Ames' Takeaways:

- Human biology is complex.
- There can be a lag between bad air quality and health effects.
- Residences versus schools, what is the causation?
- Don't focus on trying to prove causation. When we improve IAQ we know that both performance and health also improve.
- Be humble about what is known and not known.
- We must take action amidst uncertainty, before we have all the answers.

### Tracey Enger - Program Manager USEPA

- The moment we are in is becoming a movement.
- The movement has the potential to become a monument.

### Mark Ames' Responds:

- Take the time to nurture, listen and understand.
- Attain consensus.
- The White House and the EPA have interesting things going on.

- When we have alignment between problems and solutions, progress on goals we care deeply about can be accelerated.

Kevin Kampschroer - GSA Acting Director, Office of High Performance Green Buildings

- If you think your building is operating as designed you are wrong.
- 25% of government buildings cannot utilize MERV 13 filters.
- Smart renovation, in a city which needs neither heating or cooling 170 days annually, the windows were made operable.
- Building managers want to do the right thing and don't know what to do.
- Guidance Resource <https://sftool.gov/search?Query=covid>
- Be vigilant about education.
- Covid today, the next building mass exiting event is coming.

Mark Ames' Takeaways:

- There's a need to raise awareness of the importance of IAQ and educate many stakeholders about solutions to IAQ problems.
- Context is key and hyper-local. We should always keep in mind the issues, problems, and preferences at the local level.

Guy Vardi - Silverstein Properties

- We are in the productivity and engagement business, not the real estate business.
- Ventilation and health are interrelated.
- Some new buildings have a 30% reduction in sick days per annum.

Mark Ames' Takeaways:

- Cognitive performance improves when CO<sup>2</sup> and VOCs are reduced.
- There are many options available for improving IAQ, and AIHA members can help decision-makers select the best option for them, given their needs, preferences, opportunities, and constraints.

Shelly Miller, PhD - University of Colorado Boulder

- Installation of germicidal UVC lights in childcare centers and elsewhere.
- Installation of UVC lights requires: proven product, proper design, trained installers and ongoing maintenance.

- UVC wavelengths: 254nm is technology we know. New technology we are doing a lot of research on is 222nm. Beware of untrustworthy products and suppliers.
- Need for training infrastructure.

#### Mark Ames' Takeaways:

- Many product offerings are available.
- AIHA can assist buyers who need guidance.

#### Dr. Richard Corsi, PhD - University of California at Davis

- Historically IAQ research funding has been anemic.
- Over the past 50 years, outdoor air quality has improved due to the Clean Air Act.
- Outdoor Air Quality Standards have evolved due to 50 years of research.
- We need something like a "Clean Indoor Air Act".
- Wrote a paper 22 years expressing the need, imagine where we would be if we had started a "Clean Indoor Air Act" years ago?

#### Mark Ames' Takeaways:

- A "Clean Indoor Air Act" is an interesting idea.
- Regarding IAQ technical knowledge and research, what's the gap and what's needed to close it?
- It's useful to envision the type of building and community each we would like to live in. From that, we can imagine how to partner with government and work with stakeholders and build consensus to realize a common vision.
- Professional debate is necessary.
- When do you have enough information for action?
- Embrace the struggle for progress.

#### Scott Frank - Jaros, Baum & Bolles

- Changing behavior is dependent upon raising awareness. Suggests carrying a portable IAQ monitor
- Legacy standards result in sub-par IAQ.
- Improving IAQ is a consumer choice decision.
- The real estate market is efficient in matching demand.
- "See something, do something", an IAQ call to action is needed.

- The opportunity won't last forever.

#### Mark Ames' Takeaways:

- Raise awareness at the grassroots level.
- Change needs to occur at the local level.
- The White House can't fix the problem alone.
- Strength in groups like AIHA with members, volunteers, networking, resources, and conversations that can influence and drive change.

#### **ROUNDUP**

- Radio Joe opined that in general the IAQ industry was underrepresented at the event.
- IAQ practitioners could have provided valuable insights.
- Protecting every American, including our most vulnerable populations, in public indoor spaces. Unfortunately due to time constraints we didn't have any clips from that panel which included:
  - Kenneth Mendez, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
  - Dr. Linsey Marr, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
  - Carl Howell, Community Teamwork
  - John Auerbach, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Note:** During our show prep Mark Ames mentioned that one of the most important things he got out of the conference was making connections with people like Kenneth Mendez from the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

Request for Information: Better Indoor Air Quality Management To Help Reduce COVID-19 and Other Disease Transmission in Buildings: Technical Assistance Needs and Priorities To Improve Public Health Link:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/10/05/2022-21590/request-for-information-better-indoor-air-quality-management-to-help-reduce-covid-19-and-other>

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*Z-Man signing off*

**TRIVIA:**

Name the part of government relations that involves pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, policy or active support?

Answer: Advocacy

Answered by: Bruce White