



Attributes Influencing Human Comfort – Part 2

Now let us consider the characteristics of the occupants of the space. All people bring with them health, vulnerabilities, and expectations. Their health may be excellent and they may not even notice the draft from the air conditioning. On the other hand, if the occupants are patients in a doctor's waiting room, they could perceive a cold draft as very uncomfortable and distressing.

The occupants can also vary in vulnerability. For example, cool floors will likely not affect an active adult who is wearing shoes. The same floor may be uncomfortably cold for the baby who is crawling around on it.

Lastly, the occupants bring their expectations. When we enter a prestigious hotel, we expect it to be comfortable. When we enter an air-conditioned building in summer, we expect it to be cool. The expectations may be based on previous experience in the space or based on the visual perception of the space. For example, when you enter the changing room in the gym, you expect it to be smelly, and your expectations make you more errant of reality.

The third group of factors influencing comfort is the amount of clothing and the activity level of the individual. If we are wearing light clothing, the space needs to be warmer for comfort than if we are heavily clothed. Similarly, when we are involved in strenuous activity, we generate considerable body heat and are comfortable with a lower space temperature. In the summer, in many business offices, managers wear suits with shirts and jackets while staff members may have bare arms, and light clothing. The same space may be thermally comfortable to one group and uncomfortable to the other.

And finally, the attributes influencing human comfort are much more complex than most people imagine!