



Santa Monica Malibu Schools

November 22, 2013

Message from the Superintendent
Santa Monica Malibu Unified School
Contact: Sandra Lyon, (310) 450-8338

UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENTAL TESTING

I want to provide our community an update on recent activities regarding our environmental testing in the Malibu Schools.

On Wednesday, November 20 and Thursday, November 21, SMMUSD staff had consultations with toxicologists and scientific experts from the US Environmental Protection Agency (Region 9), California Department of Toxic Substance Control, and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to review the preliminary test data from environmental testing at Malibu High School. In these meetings, EPA stated that initial review of the data confirmed there is "no acute health risk" associated with the findings and it safe to occupy the middle and high school classrooms. The majority of preliminary PCB tests show levels to be consistent with EPAs acceptable levels, even for residential settings, which are the most conservative thresholds, set by the Agency. EPA and the District also noted that a very small number of the preliminary tests which included bulk samples and wipe samples taken from caulk used primarily in window sills showed levels that are slightly above EPA guidelines. The agency stressed that it is important to understand that these so called "trigger levels" do not indicate any immediate health risk. Due to the small number of elevated results the school district, EPA, DTSC, LA County Health will now begin a collaborative process to develop a plan to do additional testing and immediate remediation to work towards eliminating any potential exposure to PCBs. The school district will be releasing all data as soon as it is summarized, compiled and reviewed by the lead environmental agencies and district officials. The district is committed to assuring that all its children are safe and secure and learning environments are healthy.

Thursday's meeting also included the Malibu Schools Environmental Task Force, which offered their analysis, recommendations for next steps, and to take questions. The following summarizes the key points addressed in these meetings:

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District

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Board of Education: Ben Allen • Oscar de la Torre • José Escarce • Maria Leon Vazquez • Laurie Lieberman • Ralph Mechur • Nimish Patel
Sandra Lyon, Superintendent

- The EPA said that PCBs measured in these preliminary tests pose no acute threat and it is safe to occupy the classrooms.
 - PCB levels were evaluated using the conservative *residential levels*, and even at this level the findings are within acceptable health ranges.
- The levels found in caulking around windows do exceed the allowable regulatory limit, which requires additional testing and a plan to (1) identify and (2) mitigate PCB contaminants found in our schools. As background, PCBs were used in public construction between 1950 – 1979 until banned by the federal government. Regulatory limits triggering the need to investigate and abate PCBs in caulking are different than health limits and are defined by the Toxic Substances Control Act.
- The EPA stressed that even when there is no immediate health issue, mitigation must take place if there is evidence that regulatory limits are exceeded.
- DTSC reviewed the District’s soil Removal Action Completion Report and observed that no airborne PCBs were detected and the soil concentrations did not represent a health hazard.

The preliminary environmental testing was limited to the rooms at Malibu High School that raised employees’ and parents’ questions. This first phase testing was intended to provide instructive data that would guide our next steps. At this time, I can confirm that our immediate next step will be to engage the EPA and DTSA to assist in creating a plan for additional analysis and site remediation.

At Thursday night’s meeting of the Board of Education, I recommended and the Board approved that we enter into a formal agreement with the EPA to outline necessary additional testing, a remediation plan at Malibu High School and Juan Cabrillo Elementary School to address the regulatory issues and to oversee peer reviews of data from our preliminary testing and the Arcadia reports, which contain details on the Malibu High School soils remediation performed in 2010.

My Observation

Through this experience, I have become keenly aware that the EPA and other regulatory agencies are concerned with PCBs and intend, in my opinion, to work with our District to set a model for analysis and mitigation of these

contaminants, which were unfortunately used in the construction of public projects for nearly three decades. I am resolved to work cooperatively with these government agencies, to hire the experts who can properly and efficiently guide us, and to ask questions and seek answers on behalf of our entire school community.

A study session will be held on Thursday, December 12 at 5:30pm at the District Office where the Board of Education will receive my recommendations for additional, district-wide testing and remediation, which will be overseen by the government health authorities, recommendations for best practices facilities cleaning protocols, and a plan for increasing the District's communications capacity to better address the community's desire to receive timely information and updates.