



Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor  
Eric E. Whitaker, M.D., M.P.H., Director

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August 14, 2003

MCLEAN COUNTY (NORMAL) - High School Indoor Air Investigation

Dr. Daniel Steska, Superintendent  
McLean County Unit Number 5 School District  
1809 West Hovey Avenue  
Normal, Illinois 61761

Dear Dr. Steska:

At your request, Cary Ware from the Illinois Department of Health (IDPH) conducted an investigation at the new Normal Community High School (NCHS) on July 31, 2003. The investigation was initiated in response to complaints that teachers were developing skin rashes and other symptoms similar to those reported in the spring at the former NCHS on Kingsley Street. Affected teachers were concerned an environmental cause was triggering their health complaints since symptoms would disappear upon leaving the school building.

Our investigation focused on affected teachers' new classrooms and their supplies that were packed in boxes and transported from the former NCHS. Real-time air sampling for hydrogen sulfide, carbon monoxide, ammonia, methane, volatile organic compounds, hydrocarbons, and petroleum-based compounds did not detect levels that would present a health hazard. Dust sample analysis detected some cellulose fibers consistent with cardboard and other paper materials. There were no fiberglass insulation or asbestos fibers identified.

At the time of the investigation, no environmental cause for the reported rashes was determined. Nevertheless, the following recommendations were discussed with Dr. Nuckolls:

- ▶ Remove the boxes from the complainants' rooms.
- ▶ Unpack contents in a staging area (e.g., loading dock) away from classrooms and the school's ventilation system.
- ▶ Trained staff or cleaning contractor should clean contents with a wet wipe method and HEPA vacuum in a manner that will contain dusts.
- ▶ Protective clothing should be worn by clean-up crew to prevent skin and inhalation exposure to suspect dust.
- ▶ Properly dispose of the boxes.
- ▶ Consult with the Department of Labor prior to initiating the cleaning process.

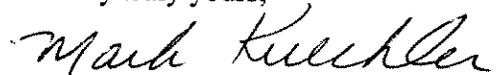
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NCHS

Subsequent to IDPH's investigation, the Department of Labor's investigation observed mold growth on some paper materials including books and files. Mold contaminated paper items can not be effectively cleaned and therefore should be removed and discarded. Enclosed is a fact sheet on the potential health effects from exposure to mold.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has developed the Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools kit. This kit shows schools how to carry out a practical plan of action to improve indoor air problems at little or no costs using straightforward activities and in-house staff. The kit includes checklists for school employees, a guide for coordinating the checklists, fact sheets on indoor air pollution issues, and sample policies and memos. Information in this kit may be helpful to the district in your continuing efforts to address indoor air concerns. Further information about the kit is enclosed.

If you have any further questions, please contact Cary Ware or me at our Champaign Regional Office located at 2125 South First Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820-7499, telephone (217) 278-5900, fax (217) 278-5959.

Very truly yours,



Mark Kuechler, P.E.  
Regional Engineer

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Enclosures

cc: Champaign Regional Office  
Division of Environmental Health  
County Health Department  
Dr. Jeanette Nuckolls, Principal  
Cheryl Neff, Department of Labor