

From: STEVENER, SCOTT E [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=649167]
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To: PEIRCE, BOB [AG/1000] [bob.peirce@monsanto.com]; YOUNG, GLYNN [AG/1000] [glynn.young@monsanto.com]
Subject: FYI - Crews clean up PCBs at 2 Anniston schools - The Anniston Star (Alabama)

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Crews clean up PCBs at 2 Anniston schools

By Megan Nichols

It looks like crews will meet a goal to clean up polychlorinated biphenyl contamination at two local schools before students return Thursday, officials said.

The toxic chemical was found in dirt outside Constantine Elementary School and Anniston High School. PCBs also were found inside Anniston High.

Dirt contaminated with PCBs has been removed from Constantine Elementary and Anniston High, said Gayle Macolly, Solutia's remedial projects manager. Crews were placing new sod at the sites on Tuesday.

PCBs also were found in dust inside Anniston High School, Macolly said. Solutia routinely tests for PCBs inside homes or properties, but only finds contamination indoors about 20 percent of the time, she said. Because the dust-test results only came back on Friday, more than two dozen people have been cleaning the school since the weekend, Macolly said.

"We're wiping down the walls, cleaning the floors, desks, bookshelves, pictures everything," she said.

Macolly said that work will be finished today. She said the contamination was found only in the entrance nearest to the outdoor remediation.

"We sampled the rugs near that door and that's where we found it," she said. "The school was very clean, but it's harder to extract the dirt from the rugs."

The Foothills Community Partnership discovered the PCBs during soil sampling at the schools. Under an agreement with Foothills, chemical manufacturer Solutia is responsible for removing soil contaminated with PCBs.

PCBs, a suspected carcinogen, were produced in west Anniston by Monsanto Co. from 1929 to 1971. Rain runoff carried PCBs that escaped the plant through drainage ditches to Snow Creek, which flows into Choccolocco Creek. The chemical also settled in the yards of many properties near the plant.

Macolly said community members had said that contaminated foundry fill was brought in to level some areas when the schools were built.

Solutia was spun off from Monsanto in 1997 and assumed the company's liability for the contamination when it took over the plant. Pharmacia Corp., which merged with the former Monsanto Co., also is responsible for Anniston's PCB cleanup.

Macolly said non-hazardous concentrations of contaminated soil were found on the south end of Anniston High and along the front sidewalk at Constantine.

Efforts to reach Anniston Schools Superintendent Joan Frazier on Tuesday were unsuccessful.

