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Binghamton, N.Y.— 25 Cents

PCBs may be freed in air during week

By LOIS FECTEAU

To clean up the contaminated Binghamton State Office Building, state officials definitely plan to ventilate the building, possibly by the end of next week.

Before any polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are released into Binghamton's air, however, the state Department of Environmental Conservation will conduct tests to make certain chemical levels are within air quality standards.

"There are air emission standards that we would impose for any industry or firm that would be venting something like this. If they get the levels down inside, sooner or later it will be done. To get the building functioning again they will have to vent," said Patrick E. Mullins, a senior engineer in the Binghamton environmental office.

"The public certainly will be told all the facts. I don't know how reassuring that will be . . . Venting is something we must do," said David K. Seiffert of the state Office of General Services, which is supervising the cleanup.

"And even though we're talking contamination, the total level (of PCBs) is quite low. Unfortunately, just the mention of PCBs scares the hell out of everybody," Seiffert said.

State officials plan to complete a surface cleanup of the building, including vacuuming and washing floors and walls by mid-week.

"Then I want to ventilate," Seiffert said.

Mullins said the state is taking samples to try to assess "normal" amounts of PCBs in Binghamton's air.

"We're working to set up a monitoring system. Before they turn the system on we want to get some ambient readings. I'm sure people will want to know what effect they'll have on the environment," Mullins said.

Seiffert said safety precautions will be taken during venting and said the public would be told ahead of time.

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