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# More Toxins Found by State At Its Binghamton Building

By ROBIN HERMAN
Special to The New York Times

ALBANY, Feb. 26 — The New York State Health Department has discovered additional and deadlier toxins in a state office building known to have been contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls. A cleanup of the building in downtown Binghamton was halted today by the department.

Dr. Glenn E. Haughie, deputy public health director, said at a news conference that dioxin and dibenzofuran, among the most toxic manmade chemicals known, had been found in samples of the poisonous soot that permeated the building following a fire in a basement transformer before dawn on Feb. 5.

The Binghamton building, which is part of a $24 million complex opened in 1973, is believed to be the first office building in the world to have been totally contaminated with these chemicals. File cabinets, desks, papers, telephones and other office equipment all received a fine dusting with the chemical-bearing soot circulated through the building's exhaust system.

State officials, now uncertain how to decontaminate the building and its contents, are seeking proposals from private companies specializing in contaminant removal.

The 18-story building, in which 750 state employees work, has been closed since the contamination occurred. Until now, the New England Pollution Control Company had been removing the soot, sending in workers wearing protective equipment.

Dr. Haughie said he had "no information to believe the dioxins or dibenzofurans are in the air."

While there are Federal safety standards for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's), no safety standards exist for long-range exposure to either dioxin or dibenzofuran, which are known carcinogens.

Assemblyman James R. Tallon Jr., Democrat of Binghamton, who is chairman of the Assembly Health Committee, said the procedure that the state uses to remove the additional chemicals in the building would "weigh on the ultimate credibility of a decision to go back in." Mr. Tallon's regional office is in the building, as are those of the Senate majority leader, Warren M. Anderson, Republican of Binghamton, and Assemblyman James W. McCabe Sr., a Binghamton Democrat.

### 'Plowing New Territory'

John C. Egan, the state's Commissioner of General Services, said: "We are plowing new territory in this case. If it appears we may be a little supercautious on this one in Binghamton, we're doing it for good reason."

He said that the building would be closed for a minimum of six months.

The Health Department's analysis showed tetrachlorodibenzofuran (TCDF) in amounts of about 200 parts per million by weight and tetrachlorodibenzodioxin (TCDD) in four parts per million by weight.

Dr. Steven Stellman, assistant vice president for epidemiology at the American Cancer Society, called that dioxin level "a very high amount." He said it was "higher than the average range of dioxins present in Agent Orange and much higher than the level present in commercial herbicides."

Dioxin and dibenzofuran are the active chemicals in Agent Orange, a defoliant used in the Vietnam War. A study of Agent Orange is being made by a temporary state commission created last year.

Dr. Stellman said there was "no question" that dioxin is a carcinogen, although there was "no good evidence" for what levels cause specific illnesses in humans.

He said there was "ample evidence that industrial exposure to dioxin causes a whole range of conditions such as skin conditions, neurological disorders and possibly psychological and gastrointestinal disorders."

Dr. James Allen, a former professor of pathology at the University of Wisconsin who has done extensive research on dioxin, calls it "at least a million times more toxic than PCB's."

### Periodic Blood Tests

According to the state's Office of General Services, Lois Wittemore, a security guard, was the only person in the Binghamton office building at the time of the fire. The Health Department is giving periodic blood tests to the guard and the dozen or so firefighters who put out the fire as well as the cleanup workers.

Mr. Egan speculated that the dioxin and dibenzofuran could have been released from the melting of the insulation around the transformer.

The director of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, Meyer S. Frucher, has recommended that state employees displaced by the building's closing not be charged vacation time for the days they missed as the state searched for alternate locations.

Contaminated papers impounded in the building include 13,000 active case files belonging to the Workers' Compensation Board. The board is distributing emergency information reply cards for claimants to begin reconstructing their cases from other sources.

Commissioner Egan said the cleanup had already cost the state $500,000, not including the cost of relocating the 750 state workers, and could eventually total millions of dollars.



Before cleanup was halted at state office building in

# F.A.A. Calls Arger

By RICHARD WITKIN

Federal officials said yesterday they had asked for statements from the crew of an Argentine airline jet to aid their inquiry into why the plane, flying in clouds, came close to crashing into a television mast atop a World Trade Center tower in lower Manhattan at 10:05 P.M. last Friday.

The air-traffic controller who ordered the Aerolineas Argentinas plane to reverse course immediately when it was only three to four miles from the tower was quoted by the head of his union local as saying he "did not know if the plane would hit the tower at that distance."

The controller, Donald Zimmerman, was said to have been so shaken by the experience that, as frequently happens after a close call, he had gone on sick leave.

Recalling two other hazardous incidents in the New York area since 1977 in which Argentine planes were involved, Representative Jonathan B. Bingham, Democrat of the Bronx, wrote the acting chief of the Federal Aviation Administration urging an examination of the "credentials of pilots flying for" the airline.

He said: "Three 'near-misses' by one airline seems extraordinary. I don't believe we should

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