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# More 'intense' cleanup needed

By STEVE GEIMANN

A new set of tests from the contaminated Binghamton State Office Building show that a more intense cleanup will be needed before the building reopens, perhaps in two weeks.

Samples taken from a portion of the fourth floor vacuumed this week showed significant levels of polychlorinated byphenyls (PCBs), the toxic chemical spewed from a transformer last Thursday.

Although the levels were considerably below tests taken after the mishap, officials said a more thorough cleaning is required before new tests are conducted.

A soap and water wash will be made over the weekend. If tests still show contamination, an industrial-type solvent will be used to cleanse the remaining traces of toxic soot and ash that spread throughout the building.

"The levels are going down rapidly," said Dr. Arnold J. Schecter, county health commissioner. "Soap and water and elbow grease is still needed. The work yet to come is "two to three times" what it was for the vacuuming, Schecter said.

Schecter also warned that tests made on "hidden", spaces above false ceilings, inside air vents and in vaults under the floors may discover additional contamination that must be cleaned, which could further delay the re-opening.

The disruption of state opertions entered a second week with the bulk of the Department of Transportation moving into the Naval Reserve Center at 51 Whitney Ave. In addition, larger desks were delivered to state agencies housed at ten locations around the city.

Schecter said the new tests received last night from Albany showed 200 micrograms of PCBs per square meter in a vacuumed section of the fourth floor compared with 84,000 micrograms per square meter before vacuuming.

By comparison, a work table at the Broome County Health Department, 20 Wall St., showed 0.6 micrograms per square meter.

State health officials are still devising guidelines to determine when the PCB level has reached satisfactory levels.

Air in the 18-story tower remains tainted with PCBs, Schecter said. Tests showed 2 to 9 micrograms of PCBs per cubic meter in one section of the building.

Health officials are aiming for less than 1 microgram per cubic meter — a recommendation of the National Institute of Occupational Health.

As testing continued yesterday, two 10-ton transformers damaged by explosions and fires were hauled to a General Electric Co. plant in Tonawanda, near Buffalo, for reconstruction.

David K. Seiffert, chief of the cleanup, said the transformers may be used in another state office building, or will be retained as back-up units, admitting it "wasn't good public relations" to return the units to Binghamton.

Seiffert also said the PCB-based oil drained from the two units will be reclaimed and returned to the transformers.

Rebuilding the transformers is cheaper than disposal, he said. Burying the transformers in a landfill and burying the oil will cost about $50,000 compared with the $20,000 cost to rebuild, Seiffert said.

CECOS International Inc. will begin carting away the sealed barrels of toxic wastes to its certified landfill near Niagara Falls today.

Access to the building was being limited yesterday to slow the use of special protective suits and allow workers to move more quickly through the tower, Seiffert said.

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