

Some workers forget cleanup rules

By STEVE GEIMANN

State officials running the massive cleanup of toxic waste from the Binghamton State Office Building clamped down on workers yesterday after some apparently forgot procedures, causing skin rashes and watering eyes.

Officials said some workers left the basement work site of the 16-story tower with possibly contaminated materials, or walked from the office building to City Hall still wearing protective suits.

"We did have some problems," said David

K. Seifert, the state official in charge of the cleanup operation.

To correct the problem, the state hired an industrial hygienist from Galson Technical Services Inc. of Syracuse yesterday which released a directive to teach crews proper procedures, such as keeping their hands away from their faces and washing immediately after leaving the site.

Dr. Arnold J. Schecter, county health commissioner, also said some workers complained

after touching their faces with suit-covered hands. At least one worker complained of flushing ill.

"We have no serious problems, at least medically," Schecter said.

The foul-ups surfaced on the seventh day of an unprecedented cleanup of toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from the tower, which officials expect to remain closed through next week.

Some city workers became alarmed yesterday when they saw men walking into City Hall in protective suits and carrying dirty respirators.

Seifert reassured the workers, saying, "It's inconceivable that it would have much of an effect on people unless it was over a long period of time."

Schecter has agreed to meet tomorrow with City Hall workers to allay their fears. City union leaders requested the meeting.

Schecter has also requested that the state hire a private consultant to develop a program for explaining safety and health aspects of the cleanup to 725 office building workers.

Results of air and surface tests made Tuesday, including a sample taken from a vacuumed floor, will not be available until today while new tests on spaces inside walls and behind false ceilings will be made today, he said.

"I don't expect any surprises," Schecter said.

Thousands of files and papers in the building, apparently will require more cleaning than expected. One sheet was vacuumed yesterday but still carried visible traces of soot, he said.

In related developments, City Fire Marshall Steven Sedor said it was unlikely the exact cause of the fire will be determined since most of the damaged electrical equipment has been removed. Sedor hopes to make "an educated guess" of the cause.

Officials also said 80 barrels of toxic waste taken from the building will be headed to Niagara Falls beginning tomorrow by CECOS International Inc., a federally-certified transporter of toxics.



Workers from the state Department of Taxation settle into their temporary new home in the Marine Midland Plaza.

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