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PCB tests halt cleanup

From Staff and Wire Reports

DURHAM — Cleanup of a PCB spill near Duke University was suspended Wednesday when tests showed high levels of the suspected cancer-causing chemical in a drainage pipe.

Durham County officials said the high levels of the chemical may mean that the county will have to dig up the drainage pipe rather than clean it out.

Workmen are trying to flush out the pipe, which leads to Sandy Creek from the Duke campus, where the PCB leaked from an electrical transformer last month.

Tests taken Friday showed that water from the pipe had 18 parts per billion of PCB, while one part per billion is the maximum allowable level under environmental guidelines.

The work was suspended while county officials await word from the state on what further cleanup steps must be taken. Workers said they suspected that the high levels found in Friday's test were the result of pockets of PCB being trapped in the drainage pipe.