

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region V
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Monday, September 29, 2008

From: Tricia Edwards/JJ Justice

Subject: Initial and Final POLREP
East Middle School ER
510 Emerick Street, Ypsilanti, MI
Latitude: 42.2342000
Longitude: -83.5978000

POLREP No.:	1	Site #:	
Reporting Period:	9/25-29/08	D.O. #:	
Start Date:	9/25/2008	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	9/25/2008	Response Type:	Emergency
Demob Date:	9/28/2008	NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:	9/28/2008	Incident Category:	
CERCLIS ID #:		Contract #	
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

East Middle School is located at 510 Emerick Street in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Enrollment at the the school is approximately 490 students in grades six through eight. The school is located in a mixed residential and commercial area. The school is bordered to the north by residential homes and Maus Avenue, to the east by residential homes and Emerick Street, to the south by Tyler Road and Interstate 94, and to the west by mixed commercial and residential areas.

On September 25, 2008, several staff members and students from the school complained of symptoms of vomiting, headache and nausea. The staff and students were located in classrooms 103,104,105 and 106 at the time of onset of the symptoms. School officials evacuated and closed the school around 1pm that afternoon due to the complaints.

The Ypsilanti Fire Department and the Washtenaw County HazMat Team conducted air monitoring in and around the school building with a four gas meter (O2, H2S, CO and LEL), freon meter and a Photoionization Detector (PID). No readings above background were detected on any of the instruments. Per standard protocol for suspicious odor complaints, the roof HVAC system was checked and twelve dead ducks were observed on the roof near the HVAC system. The ducks were in various states of decay and appeared to have been dead for quite some time.

In addition, a natural gas line leak was discovered in the adjacent Emerick Street about 90 feet from the school. Intermittent methyl mercaptan/natural gas odors were observed throughout the evening.

Officials contacted the US EPA for additional monitoring and sampling assistance.

Current Activities

US EPA and START contractors arrived on the scene at approximately 1800 hours on September 25. After discussing a monitoring and sampling approach with School and Washtenaw County HazMat officials, air monitoring was conducted throughout the school building and on the building roof with a TVA-1000 Flame Ionization Detector (FID). FID readings in the school building rooms (Rooms 103, 104, 105, and 106) ranged from background to 2 units above background. FID readings on the building roof ranged from background to 60 units above background in areas where a strong mercaptin odor was noted, presumably from the natural gas leak in Emerick Street just east of the school building.

START collected air samples from Room 104 overnight on September 25, and submitted them to the lab for volatile organic compound (VOC) and organochlorine pesticide analysis. Analytical results were received on September 26, and indicated no contaminants of concern in the sampled classroom.

On Friday September 26, EPA and START collected additional air samples from Rooms 103, 104, 105,

and 106, as well as from the south courtyard. These samples were collected during the day time in order to re-create the same atmospheric conditions as when the initial symptoms were reported. Analytical results were received on September 27 and 28, and no contaminants of concern were detected.

A water sample was collected on September 26 from a small pond in the north courtyard and submitted to the lab for VOC, Semi-VOC, pesticide and herbicide analyses. Analytical results indicated that no contaminants of concern were detected.

Air monitoring conducted with the FID on September 26 indicated all classrooms were at background levels.

The gas leak was repaired on Friday September 26, 2008 by the local natural gas provider.

US EPA collected all of the duck remains from the roof on September 26, 2008. The remains were transported to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) laboratory in Lansing, MI for analysis. Preliminary results indicate that there is not enough tissue left to determine the cause of death. However, MDNR reports that most of the birds appear to have been juveniles and flightless at the time of death. In addition, MDNR reports that the ducks had died several weeks to a month prior to their discovery.

On Sunday September 28, a group of officials convened to discuss the US EPA analytical results and determine a further course of action. Representatives of US EPA, East Middle School, Ypsilanti Public Schools, Washtenaw County Public Health Department, Michigan Department of Community Health, Ypsilanti Fire Department, and Washtenaw County HazMat Team participated in the discussions. The health officials determined that the symptoms were most likely related to natural gas exposure, and the available analytical data indicated the indoor air quality at the school was safe for re-occupation.

The natural gas provider monitored the areas in and around the school late on September 28 as a precaution. No residual natural gas leaks or odors were detected.

East Middle School re-opened for a full day of classes on Monday September 29, 2008.

Planned Removal Actions

No further US EPA actions anticipated at this time.

Next Steps

Finalize letter report detailing all specific analytical results and US EPA actions.

Distribute Final Letter Report to all interested parties.

Key Issues

MDNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife will continue to investigate the circumstances involving the death of the ducks and pursue any actions they deem appropriate.

response.epa.gov/eastmiddleschooler