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*Superintendent*



## BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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### BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS Branford, CT

#### Francis Walsh Intermediate School Notification Temporary Closing of Gymnasium and Swimming Pool Areas

**For Immediate Release:** Branford, CT – Monday, August 28, 2017 – As part of the upcoming alteration and expansion project at Francis Walsh Middle School, the Town's environmental consultant, Langan CT, Inc. (Langan), performed a pre-construction hazardous building material survey to evaluate whether any materials to be impacted by the project would require special handling. As expected, given the age of the school (constructed circa 1970), the survey identified the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in certain building caulking and glazing compounds at concentrations regulated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) -- at or above 50 parts per million (ppm). PCBs were widely used in building materials prior to the 1980s, and are commonly found in public school buildings of similar age throughout Connecticut (and across the country). The materials identified at Francis Walsh Middle School with PCBs at concentrations above 50 ppm (as well as other materials containing PCBs at lower levels) are slated for removal as part of the phased alteration and expansion project, tentatively set to commence in the summer of 2018.

Although not a regulatory requirement, as a conservative measure and in accordance with USEPA's Best Management Practices (BMPs) for schools, the Town conducted indoor air and wipe testing to determine if PCBs found in the building materials slated for removal as part of the renovation project were present in indoor air or dust. Langan collected 24 air samples and 28 wipe samples throughout the school.

All wipe sample results were below the USEPA recommended threshold concentration of 1 ug/100cm<sup>2</sup>. All air sample results throughout the school were below the USEPA recommended indoor air guidance values for elementary school aged children (6 - <12 years old) (with two exceptions as noted below), older children, faculty and staff. At two locations only, the gymnasium and swimming pool areas, air sample results identified concentrations exceeding the USEPA recommended guidelines for PCBs in indoor air for children under the age of 12 only, and not for any other category. (The Langan report is in progress and will be posted on the District's website.) While the most conservative USEPA indoor air guidance values assume exposure for 8 hours a day and 185 days a year, in an abundance of caution, First Selectman Jamie Cosgrove, and Superintendent of Schools Hamlet Hernandez, decided that it is in the best interest of the students, faculty and community to proactively restrict access to the gymnasium, pool, auxiliary gym and locker rooms (which are served by air heating/cooling systems that are separate from the rest of the school), pending implementation of appropriate BMPs and retesting to confirm that air sample results in those areas are below the USEPA recommended guidance levels for individuals of any age.

***To summarize: (1) all PCB indoor air sample results throughout the school were below the USEPA recommended indoor air guidance values for elementary school aged (6 - <12 years old) (except for the gymnasium and pool areas) and older children, as well as for faculty, staff and other adults; and***

*(2) the indoor air PCB results for the gymnasium and pool areas exceeded the USEPA recommended guidance value for elementary school aged children (6 - <12 years old) only, but not the recommended USEPA guidance values for older children or for faculty, staff and other adults.*

### **Why was the environmental testing conducted at Francis Walsh Intermediate School?**

In order to obtain state funding for school construction projects, applicants are required to prepare and submit numerous documents/reports for review by the Office of School Construction Grants and Review (OSCGR). One component of this process is the completion of a NESHAP (National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants) compliant hazardous building materials survey, which includes, among other items, the sampling of building materials suspected to contain PCBs. Although not a regulatory requirement, if PCBs are identified in building materials at levels regulated by the USEPA (i.e., at or above 50 ppm), USEPA guidance recommends considering the sampling of indoor air. If initial indoor air sampling identifies PCBs in indoor air at concentrations above the relevant recommended guidance value (i.e., based on the age of the occupants and amount of time they spend in the area(s)), USEPA guidance recommends that schools implement appropriate BMPs (e.g., restrict access, increase ventilation, perform proper cleaning of the area(s)) and resample the air to confirm indoor air results are below the recommended applicable guidance value.

### **What are the next steps?**

As stated above, although not required by law, as a conservative measure we have decided to restrict access to the gymnasium and pool areas as of Friday, August 25, 2017, prior to school commencing on Monday, August 28, 2017. Discussions are underway among the USEPA, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection and Langan, to determine the appropriate interim and long-term course(s) of action, in accordance with the USEPA's BMPs for PCBs in schools. Upon implementation of appropriate interim measures, additional air sampling will be conducted to confirm PCB concentrations in air are below the relevant recommended guidance values. Only then will the closed areas be re-opened to students, faculty and the public. We are working as quickly as possible to develop interim solutions and provide an estimated timeframe to re-open. As noted above, the final solution will be the complete removal of PCB-containing materials during the planned renovation/construction activities anticipated to commence in 2018.

### **Information on PCBs Published by USEPA:**

USEPA Fact Sheet on PCBs in Schools:

<https://www.epa.gov/pcbs/fact-sheet-practical-actions-reducing-exposure-polychlorinated-biphenyls-pcbs-schools-and-other>

USEPA Questions and Answers on PCBs in Building Materials:

<https://www.epa.gov/pcbs/questions-and-answers-about-polychlorinated-biphenyls-pcbs-building-materials>

### **For More Information:**

Inquiries should be directed to the Office of the Superintendent, Hamlet M. Hernandez, Town of Branford, Board of Education, at: [wisproject@branfordschools.org](mailto:wisproject@branfordschools.org) or (203) 315-7809.

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