March 12, 2020

Dear Northport Middle School Community:

I am writing to inform you that yesterday we received a letter from the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) notifying us that they received and reviewed the investigative data report created by PWGC in relation to the benzene and mercury that was previously identified in the sanitary systems. I also want you to be aware that the anticipated remediation is underway.

As Superintendent, my top priority is to protect the health and safety of our students and staff. From the outset, we have been coordinating with several government agencies including the SCDHS, the New York State Department of Health, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Be assured that we continue to work with these governmental agencies while completing the full comprehensive review. We are also fully committed to ensuring that the residents of Northport-East Northport have access to all of the same resources available to the District.

To be clear, the environmental assessment referenced in the SCDHS letter IS NOT the full comprehensive study which is expected to be completed and reported to the community in the next few weeks. The report that the County received was solely UIC data or “Underground Injection Control” data pertaining to the Northport Middle School campus.

In order to receive a “Notice to Remediate” allowing the work to start from SCDHS, investigative data had to be sent DIRECTLY from PWGC to SCDHS. In other words, the District DOES NOT have a copy of the report sent to SCDHS from PWGC. This is standard protocol.

You may notice that there are additional UIC structures and contaminants listed in the County’s letter. This is because PWGC not only tested the two identified septic systems on the southern and eastern sides of the school where the benzene was found, but also tested and reported on ALL of the sanitary systems located in the Middle School, which is frequently requested by SCDHS when contamination is identified in one or more on-site UICs. This is why there are more structures and contaminants listed in the County’s letter. Although additional remediation is required due to contaminants found at actionable levels, it is important to note that NONE were measured at levels higher than what was previously reported about mercury and benzene.
For clarity, the sanitary systems / leaching pools are identified as:

- The northern sanitary system, which includes ST007, ST008, DW039, DW040, and DW044, is connected to the N-Wing, K-Wing, and L-Wing.
- The southern sanitary system, which includes ST009, LP011, LP012, LP013, LP015, and LP016, is connected to the cafeteria, kitchen, H-Wing, and G-Wing (exclusive of G-51, G-52, and G-53).
- The eastern sanitary system, which includes ST010, is connected to the gymnasium, the main office, and the A- through D-Wings.
- ST003 and Abandoned pool G-Wing are both related to the science classroom sinks in G-51, G-52, and G-53.
- ST006 is connected to the middle M-Wing building.
- LP010, LP027, and LP034 are stormwater drains.

The following statement made in February by Brad Hutton, Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Public Health at New York Department of Health remains true today: “there was a detection of mercury in a cesspool that was connected to drains from old science rooms and also benzene in two septic tanks. Certainly, those are things that need to be addressed and cleaned up. Not only were the levels not ones that would be expected to present health effects but also, they were not in locations that would typically result in exposure to students. We certainly support the need to clean them up, but really to expect health affects you would need to have a reasonable pathway for exposure where students would be exposed to those contaminants.” [https://abc7ny.com/5901303/](https://abc7ny.com/5901303/)

It is important to note that laboratory testing and hand-held instrumentation testing for VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) and mercury in air did not identify elevated concentrations of VOCs—or mercury inside the building. This remains true and is applicable to all of our sanitary systems. Therefore, there is no reason to believe students or staff have been exposed to contaminants found in the sanitary systems or leaching pools as there is no route of exposure.

Furthermore, we are happy to report that no mercury has been detected deeper than 18 feet below ground. This means that it DID NOT MIGRATE TO THE GROUNDWATER, which is approximately 110 feet below ground.

The remediation work will simply consist of pumping out the “contaminated” sludge or liquid from the septic tanks and leaching pools. At that point, the industrial waste transporter (licensed and approved by the state) will remove the waste. Finally, SCDHS will be on site during what is called “end point sampling” which is a confirmatory sampling test conducted after the remediation is performed to ensure that it was effective. This is done under County oversight to ensure that visibly impacted soils are removed to the fullest extent feasible and samples collected are representative of the soils to remain in place. PWGC will then prepare a UIC Remediation Report documenting the analytical results and, if acceptable, the County will state that remediation is complete and no further action is required. We expect remediation work to take approximately 1-3 weeks.

We understand how unsettling issues surrounding environmental matters are to a community. Our commitment to respond and communicate in a thorough, responsible manner remains. We have continually emphasized the importance of following the facts and information presented by the
professionals. We implore the media and others to be mindful that speculation without facts or in-depth medical and scientific knowledge is counterproductive and disruptive to the emotional well-being of our students.

We expect that in a few weeks we will receive a comprehensive report from PWGC and we will present the results to the entire community. I want to thank you in advance for your patience and willingness to allow the facts and information from the report to guide the district’s decision making process.

Sincerely,

Rob Banzer
Superintendent
March 10, 2020

Mr. Robert Banzer
Northport-East Northport UFSD
158 Laurel Avenue
Northport, NY 11768

Re: Northport Middle School
11 Middleview Road, Northport, NY
SCFR# 01930

Dear Mr. Banzer:

This letter is to advise you that our office has reviewed the environmental assessment performed at the above-referenced location. Review of the laboratory analyses provided found one or more of the following compounds present in the sample(s) collected: volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, and/or heavy metals. The compounds found are present at concentrations indicative of unpermitted discharges of industrial waste. Such compounds that have exceeded Suffolk County SOP-9-95 guidelines are considered toxic or hazardous and are not to be discharged to the ground surface, sanitary systems, storm drains, or any other leaching system. Please be advised that the discharge of any liquid from an industrial process without having first obtained a SPDES permit for that discharge is a violation of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law and Articles 7 and 12 of the Suffolk County Sanitary Code. These regulations were promulgated to protect the groundwater, the drinking water resource in Suffolk County.

Due to the elevated levels found, as the owner of the referenced premises, you are directed to have all contaminated solids/sludge and liquids pumped from all contaminated structures as indicated below, including all structures connected to them not previously sampled. Please be advised that the remediation activity can only be accomplished by a licensed industrial waste transporter. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation can verify the permit status of an industrial waste transporter. NYSDEC can be reached at (518) 402-8792 or by e-mail at transport@dec.ny.gov.

**Impacted Structure(s):**

ST-007, ST-008, DW-039, DW-040, DW-044
ST-009
LP-011, LP-012
LP-013, LP-015
LP-016
ST-010
ST-003
Abandoned pool- G Wing
ST-006
LP-010, LP-027, LP-034

**Contaminant(s) Found:**

volatile organic compounds (butanone)
benzene, chlorobenzene, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead, mercury, silver
butanone, mercury
mercury, silver
mercury
benzene, chlorobenzene, xylene, mercury
mercury, silver
mercury
butanone
semi-volatile organics
Following the extraction of the contaminated soils from the leaching structures, confirmatory endpoint sample collection will be required to prove the remediation satisfactory. If endpoint samples or the nature of the contaminants indicate that further environmental contamination may be present, additional remedial measures including, but not limited to, a groundwater investigation and/or soil vapor intrusion investigation will be required by this Department.

Failure to comply with the directives set forth in this letter by April 27, 2020 will result in this matter being scheduled for a formal administrative hearing at which time the department will be seeking an Order of Abatement and the imposition of the maximum penalties of $2000.00 per day for each and every violation of the Suffolk County Sanitary Code including, but not limited to, failure to comply with the directives set forth in this letter. Your immediate attention to this matter is, therefore, expected.

Scope of work to be performed:

- Retain the services of a licensed industrial waste transporter and/or environmental consultant. Contact the NYSDEC regarding the permitting status of the waste transporter and disposal facility.
- Provide a work plan describing proposed remedial action. Waste acceptance letters issued by the disposal facility must be included.
- Provide supplemental sample data, as needed.
- Contact the undersigned to schedule a remediation inspection.
- Provide post-excavation end-point sample analyses for all impacted structures.
- Provide waste-disposal manifest(s) for all contaminated liquids and soil.
- Contact the United States Environmental Protection Agency at http://www.epa.gov/safewater/nie to register all cesspools and storm-water leaching systems as required by the EPA Underground Injection Control (UIC) program.
- For all areas of concern addressed in the environmental site assessment which are not covered under SCDHS Article-12 SOP No. 9-95 you must contact the appropriate regulatory authority for guidance.

All field activities must be scheduled at mutually agreeable times with this Department. If you have any questions concerning these matters or to schedule an appointment, please contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Edward Roe
Senior Public Health Sanitarian
Bureau of Environmental Investigation and Remediation
Office of Pollution Control
(631) 854-2501

CC: Gregson Pigott, MD, Health Commissioner, SCDHS
Christina Capobianco, Deputy Commissioner, SCDHS
Walter Dwydiak, Division Director, DEQ, SCDHS
Chris Lubicich, Chief, Office Pollution Control, SCDHS
Walter Petrule, Principal Public Health Sanitarian, OPC, SCDHS
A. Carpenter, USEPA
M. Hughes, NYSDOH
C. Engelhardt, NYSDEC
C. Haas, SPDES NYSDEC
J. Lewis, PWGCG