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Taney County Health Department



Public Health

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

August 19, 2009

On Tuesday, August 18, 2009, a mercury spill occurred in a Forsyth Middle School science classroom. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Taney County Health Department, and Missouri Department of Health were notified of the incident. Testing conducted by MDNR identified the presence of levels of mercury contamination that were higher than the Environmental Protection Agency's allowable levels. The acceptable level of mercury for a school classroom is the same as the acceptable mercury level for a residence.

It is important to remember that having mercury concentrations above acceptable levels does not necessarily mean that children who were in the affected classrooms were exposed to enough mercury to cause adverse health effects. However, it does suggest that clean up should be completed to prevent additional exposures.

"The test results from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources have confirmed that the amount of mercury measured and time students were exposed did not create the presence of a health risk," said Taney County Health Department epidemiologist, Robert Niezgoda.

The school was closed to allow for proper testing and cleanup of the spill. The actions taken by the Forsyth School district were to ensure the safety and well-being of the students and staff. School will be reopened as soon as the Missouri Department of Natural Resources concludes their testing and cleanup has been completed.

People who are concerned about potential exposures may contact the Bureau of Environmental Epidemiology at (573)751-6102 for more information on mercury exposure or their personal physician for medical concerns.

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