

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

EPA Investigating PCBs in Air in 2 Park Ridge Schools

PCB Sampling Project
Park Ridge, Illinois

August 2007

What are PCBs?

PCBs are synthetic chemicals that have been used in many commercial products for more than 60 years, including building materials (caulk, paint, fluorescent light ballasts, electrical transformers and other specialized uses). Because of evidence that PCBs persist in the environment and cause harmful effects, manufacture of PCBs was banned in 1977; existing PCBs continue to be used. EPA data indicate that PCBs are probable cancer-causing substances.

For more information

If you have any questions about EPA activities related to Park Ridge PCBs in gas lines, contact:

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Information is also available online
at www.epa.gov/region5/sites/nicorgas-pcb.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expanding its investigation of PCBs found during air sampling in utility rooms at Washington Elementary School and Lincoln Middle School in Park Ridge.

EPA does not believe that there is an immediate health threat for children or staff at the schools. However, additional sampling of classrooms is being conducted over the Labor Day weekend to determine if there is contamination in other areas of the school. The results of testing for these schools and any plans for further action will be provided to parents through their school administrators.

The investigation was prompted by information Nicor Gas Co. reported to EPA in May regarding four homes in Park Ridge that were found to have liquid contaminated with PCBs in their gas meters.

Appliances that can be affected by the liquid in gas pipelines include furnaces, boilers and water heaters. Since May, Nicor has inspected about 140 more homes, two schools and a church in Park Ridge. In homes, PCBs have not been found in the air or on surfaces that people can touch. Nicor and its natural gas suppliers have installed special equipment on their systems to remove as much liquid as possible.

This investigation at the schools will help determine if there are any PCBs outside the utility room and what the source may be. EPA is evaluating whether the source can be from liquid in gas pipelines or other possible sources of PCBs.

PCBs at varying concentrations have been found in some building materials such as caulk, paint and light ballasts. Definitive identification of sources may require additional sampling; current efforts in the schools are focused on whether any contamination exists beyond the utility rooms.