

**For Immediate Release**

April 4, 2017

**State receives results to air quality testing in leased St. Johnsbury office buildings**

**St. Johnsbury** – State officials briefed staff from the Agency of Human Services this afternoon on results of indoor air quality tests conducted this past Friday in the Agency’s leased office buildings in St. Johnsbury.

Agency of Human Services staff in St. Johnsbury offices were relocated last Thursday from their work buildings on 67-72 Eastern Avenue after state officials received notice of a potential risk to exposure to three harmful contaminants discovered at elevated levels in the buildings’ foundation. Indoor air quality tests were ordered to identify if the contaminants perchloroethylene (PCE), trichloroethylene (TCE) and chloroform were present at levels of concern inside the office buildings where employees work.

Testing results were received Monday afternoon and evaluated by scientists at the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The indoor air quality testing results showed:

- PCE and TCE are present above the Health Department’s levels of concern in two of the three buildings.
- Chloroform is present slightly above a level of concern in one of the two buildings with elevated PCE and TCE levels.
- Results for a third building did not reach VDH levels of concern for the three chemicals

PCE and TCE are classified as carcinogens. Exposure can increase risk for kidney, bladder and blood cancers. TCE has also been associated with cardiac malformation in a developing fetus. The levels of those chemicals found present in the State’s air sampling were lower than those associated in studies with measurable increases of cancer. Additionally, each of the three chemicals leaves the body in 1-2 days after a person is removed from exposure.

“The health and safety of our staff, as well as all the people who come into our offices for services, is our number one priority,” said Agency of Human Services Secretary Al Gobeille. “We acted quickly to remove staff from further possible risk of exposure to these chemicals and got the air sampling experts into the buildings the next day. I want to thank all involved in handling this situation, especially our St. Johnsbury staff and other state partners.”

The State removed approximately 85 staff from the buildings on Thursday morning, with “mission critical” staff members relocated that afternoon to alternative work locations in town to ensure that there was no disruption of services for the community. Currently, the State is working to identify temporary space that can house displaced employees, and expects to have a plan in place in the coming week.

Based on a review of the site inspection and air sampling results, the State has recommended that the property owner install mitigation measures. A series of milestones related to the development and implementation of a corrective action plan, including mitigation measures and a timeline for additional air sampling.

Any AHS staff member, or member of the community, concerned about their health related to these results, is encouraged to consult with their health care provider. People are also welcome to contact to the Vermont Department of Health at 800-439-8550.

Public Health Information on PCE: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/ToxProfiles/tp18-c1-b.pdf>

Public Health Information on TCE: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/ToxProfiles/tp19-c1-b.pdf>

Public Health Information on Chloroform: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/ToxProfiles/tp6-c1-b.pdf>

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