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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "LOW-LEVEL DIOXINS FOUND AT YARD NOT LARGE THREAT"
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Low-level dioxins found at yard not large threat

By Shirley Jacques
Staff Writer

PORTSMOUTH — Preliminary studies of new areas at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Superfund site indicate various levels of dioxin in the area of the old incinerator. The partial studies were released last night to the Restoration Advisory Board, a community group working with the Navy which was designated in 1987 as the lead agency in the cleanup.

Low-level dioxins, carcinogens that are a by-product of combustion, were detected in several samples of surface and subsurface soils.

The good news is these test results, even the highest level, are below the current Environmental Protection Agency high risk range that puts one person in a million at risk for cancer. However, some exceeded the Maine Department of Environmental Protection standard which is higher.

LeeAnn Sinagoga of Tetra Tech, the testing firm contracted by the Navy, called her presentation on dioxins found at the incinerator site "an up-front peek" at a very partial and preliminary study without a risk analysis.

Fred Evans, project manager for the Navy, says a risk assessment analysis on the incinerator site, necessary for remediation decisions, is "a year away."

Sinagoga said the risk analysis will include total dioxins in reference to three receptors — a con-

struction worker on site, an industrial worker, and a future resident.

Iver McLeod, DEP project manager for this Superfund site, said the remediation at the incinerator area is expected to be different from other areas of Seavey Island.

The open incinerator operated legally from 1965 to 1975 without emission controls. Eight surface and subsurface soil borings were drilled in the incinerator and ash disposal area and one upgradient monitoring well for the testing.

EPA project manager Meghan Cassidy reminded the board, "policy and science on dioxin are changing rapidly. Current standards are a year old, and new guidelines are expected in six months." Consequently, at present, all remedial decisions on dioxin are referred to Washington headquarters.

Cassidy said the EPA toxicologist was "not too upset" with these preliminary test results.

"The dioxins alone don't show unacceptable risk," Cassidy said. "There will be a future risk assessment, but we asked for this partial testing now to determine whether we needed to come in now for emergency type soil removal. And at this point, we do not."

Evans said the Navy is going forward with groundwater samples on site and monitoring for dioxins at the dry docks and incinerator and in mussels, sediment and juvenile lobsters.

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