

**PCB Abatement Project  
EHS Presentation  
Westgate Town Hall  
August 10, 2006**

**Present:**

DD = Dr. David Diamond, MIT Medical

LD = Louis DiBerardinis, MIT Environment, Health and Safety Office (EHS)

WS = William Van Schalkwyk, MIT EHS

JC = Jim Curtis, MIT EHS

DS = Deb Sorocco, EHS Coordinator for Dean for Student Life Programs

KN = Karen Nilsson, MIT Housing

DC = Dennis Collins, MIT Housing

**Summary of Presentation (also see Information Sheet #1):**

MIT EHS received word that PCBs were discovered in random testing done in the soil around Westgate lowrise buildings, A, B, and C. They conducted their own tests and found levels of 0.1 to 5 parts per million (ppm) PCB in the soil. Because PCB was commonly used in window caulking at the time of Westgate's construction, they think this substance originally came from the outer window seal and was gradually washed off into the soil.

PCBs have been shown to cause cancer at certain levels of exposure. However, the levels found in the Westgate soil are "orders of magnitude" less than those known to be dangerous. The reason the situation needs to be addressed is that Federal and State environmental regulations require less than 1-2 ppm out of concern that ground water and later fish will be contaminated. The concern is that the PCBs concentrate in fish tissue and could present a health risk to future consumers.

The windows have all been replaced at Westgate, so the PCBs are thought to be exclusively in the soil. Compliance will require more soil testing and possibly soil removal. There will be no apartment entry.

**Question:** Was the soil tested around other Westgate buildings?

**JC:** No. MIT EHS hypothesis is that the PCB levels will be the same throughout the lowrise area.

**WS:** The compliance process involves phases of testing and soil removal. The plan is to start with the ABC area, learn the process, and then apply it to the rest of the complex, as well as other areas at MIT.

**Question:** The highrise has more windows. Has the area around the highrise been tested?

**WS:** The original tip was regarding ABC. The entire complex will be tested, but because there are no immediate health risks or urgent environmental effects, it will be done after the compliance process for ABC.

**DC:** The highrise windows were replaced in the early 1990's. The lowrise windows were replaced in the late 1990s.

**WS:** The EPA must approve plans for testing and removal of soil. This usually means a lag time. There is also the remote possibility that the remaining old caulking below the windows and on the ends of the buildings will be replaced as well.

**Question:** Why are you not testing everywhere?

**KN:** First step is to respond to the current situation. We plan to look at all of Westgate

**Question:** What is the timeline for this process?

**WS:** Not long, although there is no timeline at present. We are waiting for the excavation to give insight. It would be cheaper to excavate everything at once, but because the EPA testing requirements are unknown, we want to do it first for ABC, then the rest.

**Question:** Is there any danger inside the apartments?

**KN:** Only the exterior of the windows had the caulking.

**Question:** Where on the buildings do you think the PCBs are?

**JC:** We think it would be on the windows' exteriors. It has been reported that more PCBs were found on the strips on the outside of the buildings where the bricks meet the concrete. The results of our tests will be in soon.

**Question:** Have the garden plots been tested?

**JC:** Three random samples were taken recently along with other tests. Results soon.

**DD:** Still no health risk if there were comparable levels in garden plots.

**Question:** Have PCB's been found anywhere else on campus?

**WS:** Only Westgate has been tested due to the tip. PCB testing is now part of protocol for any work done on campus.

**LD:** For example, asbestos and lead paint are always tested for. Now PCBs are on the list. Since the discovery at Westgate, 5-6 other MIT areas have been tested and none have been found. The plan is to start with the buildings constructed in the era when PCB's were used.

**Question:** My child eats dirt sometimes. Is there any health risk?

**DD:** No concern.

**JC:** 13 tests done on edge of playground, 1 test yielded 1 ppm.

**Question:** Which areas at Westgate have been tested?

**JC:** Building ABC, garden, playground, Tang lawn. Eventually all four sides of all buildings will be tested.