

BURLINGTON TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent
P.O. Box 428 - Hopkins Building
Burlington, NJ 08016
www.burltwpsch.org

Mrs. Mary Ann Bell, *Superintendent*

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609-387-3955 x 2057

February 16, 2017

Dear Burlington Township Families:

This communication is to provide our families with some important information and reassurances regarding one of the construction projects anticipated to be undertaken during the summer of 2017. This letter provides details regarding the identification of a potential issue, steps taken to ensure current and continued safety, and preparations for the eventual removal and replacement of the B. Bernice Young School gymnasium floor.

As with all construction projects, we engage in several months of planning to ensure the project moves smoothly once started. These preparations include the development of specifications for the exact work to be undertaken, as well as a review of the current situation. During the preparation for the gymnasium floor replacement, the District became aware of important information that must be shared with our school community. The District learned that it was likely our rubberized gym floor, originally installed in 1994, contained mercury. The District further learned many manufacturers of this type of flooring used mercury in the manufacturing of rubberized polyurethane floors to keep the rubber flexible over time.

Once the District became aware of the potential existence of mercury in the floor, a sample was sent to a certified laboratory. On Wednesday, January 11, 2017, the District received results indicating that the floor sample contained mercury. The amount of mercury in the sample indicated that the flooring, when removed, can not be placed in a regular landfill. Instead it will need to be treated as hazardous material. On the same day, the District engaged the services of a Certified Industrial Hygienist and Environmental Scientist (consultant).

The consultant provided information that indicated potential harmful effects of mercury would come from vapor in the air. On the same day, the District had the air in the B. Bernice Young School gymnasium and surrounding areas of the school building tested to determine the amount of mercury vapor in the air. The consultant immediately determined there was no threat to the people who use the gymnasium on a daily basis, based on the standards for mercury vapor exposure. This determination was derived from the use of specialized mercury monitoring equipment which was calibrated that day by a certified laboratory. During the course of monitoring, several samples in multiple

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areas were taken.

I want to assure our families, students, and staff, if there had been an imminent danger, the District would have taken appropriate measures immediately. The danger from mercury vapor is low until the flooring begins to be removed. At that time, the gymnasium will be sealed and removal will be handled by qualified individuals.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element usually found in liquid form at room temperature. Mercury is best known as the silverish material used in thermometers. It is included in many household and commercial products, including light bulbs, thermostats, household batteries and other electronic devices.

The amount of mercury vapor in the air can be affected by the ambient temperature and ventilation. Higher temperature and reduced air movement will increase the concentration of the mercury vapor. It should be noted, mercury vapor is a natural element. Even the outside air contains some mercury vapor. To ensure the vapor levels remain within acceptable standards, monitoring of the gym and surrounding areas will be conducted again as spring begins to ensure the vapor levels remain within acceptable standards.

Before the new floor can be installed, the existing floor must be removed. Normally, this would be a process undertaken by the same contractor hired to install the new floor. In this case, the removal of the existing flooring will be done under specific conditions that will allow for the safe removal, abatement and containment of the flooring material as well as its proper disposal.

It should be noted that rubberized flooring containing mercury has begun to garner attention. In fact, on January 18, 2017 New Jersey School Boards Association sent a communication to all school districts throughout the state providing guidance on [Limiting the Hazard of Rubber-Like Floors](#).

In summary, the District is going to follow the appropriate protocols to complete the abatement during the summer. We have been assured that there is no immediate danger to anyone using the area. An [executive summary](#) from our consultant is available. We have also consulted with the Burlington County Health Department.

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If you have any medical questions after reading the information and reviewing the resources provided, please reach out to your health care provider. If you have any technical questions regarding mercury (vapor), you may also contact the EPA at 866-DEP-KNOW (866-337-5669). Non-medical and non-technical questions should be directed to me, either through email or by phone. We have also created a website with relevant information. Please [click here](#) to access the website. During the actual abatement process over the summer, we will be providing our community with further important information you will need regarding building closures and schedules.

The District is committed to continuing to provide our community with information as needed. A question and answer document (Q&A) has been developed to allow our community to submit questions and have those questions answered. This [Q&A](#) will continue to be updated and is included on our website. If you would like to submit a question, please use this [form](#).

Below you will find some reference materials and website links.

Center for Disease Control (CDC): [Mercury Factsheet](#)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [Mercury in Your Environment](#)

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR): [Mercury Quick Facts](#)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH): [Mercury Vapor](#)

I hope our school community finds this letter to be comprehensive. It is our intention to provide everyone with the information and resources needed to assure that this situation is being handled in an appropriate manner. We want you to know there is no danger at this time, and the children and staff are safe at the B. Bernice Young School.

Sincerely,



Mary Ann Bell
Superintendent of Schools