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To: ALL_ACC_EMPLOYEE@mailbox.austincc.edu

Subject: Rio Grande Campus - Status Report on Room 221

ACC's Department of Environmental Health Safety & Insurance (EHS) and Public Information and College Marketing are continuing to inform interested parties about the remodeling of Rio Grande Campus (RGC) Rooms 221 and 219.

Historically, some have expressed concern about mercury in this area. Four different environmental firms have tested mercury vapor levels at RGC over the past six years, including precautionary testing during a third-floor chemistry lab remodeling project in 2005. All test results, including precautionary mercury vapor testing of Room 221 in conjunction with recent asbestos abatement and lead remediation, continue to show mercury vapor levels do not pose any risk to human health. (See further below for details.)

On Thursday, January 31, EHS hosted a meeting to share new information on the project with RGC personnel, representatives of ACC associations, AFTL Local #6249, The Accent, and the Drama Department. The following is a summary of the discussion. It is thorough, perhaps too much information for some, but it is important that all understand the college takes extraordinary measures to ensure the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff.

Rio Grande Campus (RGC) was built in 1916. Historically, Room 221 served as a chemistry lab, chemical storeroom, and darkroom as far back as 1926, areas where mercury-containing thermometers, barometers, etc., may have been in use.

Over winter break ACC conducted preliminary mercury vapor testing in order to begin remodeling the room to become a Drama Department scene shop. ACC conducts precautionary mercury vapor testing when renovations disturb original building materials in areas that may have had historical mercury use. The ACC actions follow a recommendation from the Texas Department of State Health Services, which performed mercury vapor testing at RGC, at ACC's request, in 2001. (The 2001 testing, in addition to subsequent testing, has indicated that the levels of mercury vapor do not pose a risk to human health.)

During winter break, a licensed abatement contractor, ARC Abatement, began lead and asbestos abatement. During that time, the environmental services engineering firm Baer Engineering conducted initial tests for mercury vapor and continued to monitor levels through the abatement and demolition stages of the project.

While mercury can be found in the ambient air and a variety of products such as thermostats, fluorescent lamps, and amalgam (silver) dental fillings, breathing concentrated levels of mercury is known to be a health concern.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) permissible exposure limit (PEL) for mercury vapor is 0.1 milligrams per cubic meter of air, which is also the ceiling limit. A worker's exposure to

mercury vapor shall at no time exceed this level. As recommended by the Texas Department of State Health Services, ACC has adopted the minimal risk level (MRL) established by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). The mission of the ATSDR, as an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is to serve the public by using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances. This most protective level is 0.2 micrograms (or .0002 milligrams) per cubic meter of air. The MRL is 500 times lower than OSHA's exposure limit.

It is important to note Baer Engineering findings over winter break showed at no time did mercury vapors in the breathing zone level reach the MRL or most protective limit. But testing did not stop there.

Since Room 221 is being turned into a scene shop, ACC will be installing noise reduction materials in the floors. Because original flooring was to be disturbed, precautionary core drilling tests were conducted. Twenty-four test holes were drilled, ½ inch in diameter and 1¼ inch deep, and readings were taken at the opening of the test holes. Results ranged from .000051 milligrams per cubic meter of air to .0027 milligrams per cubic meter of air. The highest mercury reading (taken in the southwest corner of the room) measured above ACC's most protective level but remained well below OSHA's permissible exposure level (see chart).

Permissible Mercury Exposure Limit

OSHA	- 0.1 milligrams per cubic meter of air
Highest test reading	- 0.0027 milligrams per cubic meter of air
ACC (MRL)	- 0.0002 milligrams per cubic meter of air

Based on test results, the college took additional precautionary measures when removing the floor:

*ARC Abatement followed protocols provided by Baer Engineering to remove flooring.

*This activity was performed on weekends due to noise.

*Activity was performed inside containment, with negative air pressure to prevent the potential release of vapors and dust into the adjoining rooms and hallway.

*Contractors used appropriate personal protective equipment for the removal and disposal of all flooring materials, as appropriate.

*Concurrent testing in the hallways and adjacent areas was performed.

During the actual removal of flooring in the room's southwest corner, the mercury vapor readings peaked at 0.0030 milligrams per cubic meter of air, which was only slightly higher than the reading on the test holes done in that area. After the demolition was completed, readings slightly higher than the most protective MRL were obtained at floor level. Based on these readings, contractors applied an amalgamating solution to the floor. This is the same procedure that was used during the renovation of the RGC chemistry lab upstairs. Once this solution

was applied, the mercury vapor readings dropped to well below the most protective level and were generally equivalent to background levels found in outside air. The readings that were done in hallways and adjacent areas were also about the same as background.

As a precaution, Baer Engineering also conducted mercury vapor tests in the southwest quadrant of the main building on the first and second floors, areas thought to have been used as science labs or for chemical storage in 1926. All readings remained well below the most protective levels at all times. In most cases, the levels were the same or lower than the mercury levels present in the outdoor air.

The college has taken an aggressive approach to abate Room 221 of asbestos and lead and to perform precautionary testing for mercury vapor. Abatement and floor removal activities were completed during the Feb. 17 weekend. Construction was scheduled to begin only after environmental experts give their "seal of approval." Once construction is completed, the area will be like new.

EHS will provide final updates and reports online. Visit <http://www.austincc.edu/ehs/communications.php> under the RGC section or contact Public Information and College Marketing for more information.