



Texas Department of Health

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Commissioner of Health

Toxic Substances Control Division
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Gary R. Bego
Chief Operating Officer

Charles E. Bell, M.D.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

December 19, 2001

Ms. Rebecca Cole
Risk Management and Insurance Coordinator
Austin Community College
9101 Tuscany Way
Austin, TX 78754

Dear Ms. Cole:

Attached you will find the Department's report describing an industrial hygiene survey performed at the request of Austin Community College on December 13, 2001, at the Rio Grande Campus (RGC), 1212 Rio Grande Street. The purpose of the survey was to identify possible areas of mercury contamination in laboratories, classrooms, and offices at the RGC. The report includes the data collection methodology, the results of the survey, interpretation of the results, and recommendations for future action by the College.

To summarize the report, ninety-two (92) air samples for mercury were taken in 19 rooms. Two (2) non-zero readings were observed at a sink drain in Room 312.0 (microbiology lab), and one (1) non-zero reading was observed in the southwest corner of Room 310.0 (biology classroom). Each of these readings indicated an air concentration of 0.003 milligram of mercury vapor per cubic meter of air (mg/m^3). A third sample at the drain in Room 312.0 and a second sample at the SW corner of Room 310.0 gave zero (0.000) readings. Therefore, the presence of mercury at those locations could not be confirmed.

To the extent that the zero readings accurately reflect the conditions in the tested rooms, there does not appear to be a public health problem from mercury contamination in the surveyed rooms at this time. A number of confounding factors were present at the time of the survey, however. These include human activity in the rooms prior to the survey; climatic and ventilation conditions both inside and outside the building; and the installation of foam in spaces above the drop ceiling of the second floor, which could block potential pathways by which any mercury vapor present might migrate from the third floor to the second floor. As such, a future survey addressing these limitations might provide more information on the conditions in the surveyed rooms and the resulting potential for public health consequences.

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If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address and telephone number on the letterhead, or by e-mail at albert.hickman@tdh.state.tx.us.

Sincerely,

Albert W. Hickman, Toxicologist
Toxic Substances Control Division

Enclosure

cc: Bronson Dorsey, Associate Vice President for Facilities and Operations
Ed Osborne, Executive Director for Marketing and Public Affairs