

(On letterhead)

For Immediate Release:

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Rapid Response Contains Mercury Spill at Sample Middle School

Quick thinking on the part of science teacher Malcomb Farbs this morning limited the area of elemental mercury contamination to one corner of a room and a single pair of running shoes. A small amount of the liquid metal, brought, against regulations, into the school by a student, spilled on the floor inside the science room. The teacher opened a window, and locked the room until a county health representative and a professional environmental cleanup contractor arrived to address the spill.

Elemental mercury has been banned in Michigan schools by law since the beginning of 2004 and the Sample Middle school was in compliance with that requirement. “We started inventorying and removing all bottles of free flowing mercury as well as laboratory thermometers, hydrometers, and a blood pressure device from the nurses office right after school ended in the spring of 2003,” said Principal Art Lemming. “We are going to include additional information on mercury in our health and science classes to make sure students understand the dangers of mercury.

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Breathing mercury vapors can cause health effects to the central nervous system and the kidneys, especially for young children and pregnant women. The Your Name Here health department will be available to advise parents and their family physicians regarding whether a blood test is necessary for anyone who was briefly exposed to mercury vapors during this event.

Mercury spills that are not addressed promptly result in widespread contamination that renders carpet, clothing, furniture and other items unusable, closes facilities, and exposes large numbers of people to health hazards.