

## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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### STATE TO CONDUCT ENVIRONMENTAL TESTS NEAR EQ SITE

**RALEIGH** – State environment and health officials today announced that the state will conduct outdoor and indoor environmental testing near the former EQ hazardous waste facility in Apex. Water, soil and indoor surfaces will be tested for heavy metals and other signs of contamination from the fire that destroyed the facility earlier this month.

“Extensive environmental testing conducted during the fire and in its aftermath have found no evidence of contamination in the vicinity of the EQ facility,” said Secretary Bill Ross of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. “This new round of testing will look for any environmental contaminants that could potentially cause long-term effects.”

“We are committed to ensuring that people near the EQ facility are safe and healthy,” said Deputy State Health Director Steve Cline. “People living and working in the area have concerns and these additional tests will address those concerns.”

Extensive testing conducted during and immediately after the fire found no short-term problems that would prevent people from reentering the area. The new round of tests is to look for environmental contaminants that could have long-term effects.

DENR will be responsible for environmental sampling around the homes. The Division of Air Quality yesterday began enlisting volunteers in a plan to take exterior wipe samples from about 30 locations (homes and buildings). Some of the buildings will be in the area close to EQ most likely to have been affected by the fire. Others will be in areas well away from EQ and will be used to determine background levels of contaminants that could be in the area but unrelated to the fire. Although none of the air quality samples collected so far have detected harmful levels of contaminants, the wipe samples will be used as a screening tool to determine whether deposition is a concern. Contaminants that will be tested for include metals, total cyanides and semivolatiles.

The Division of Waste Management will be collecting surface soil samples from the locations identified by DAQ. Samples will be analyzed for volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, PCBs and several inorganic compounds, including beryllium, manganese and cyanide.

The Division of Public Health will sample inside the same homes. Indoor sampling will consist of wiping horizontal surfaces and testing those wipes for contaminants that could indicate exposure to the fire. Only surfaces that have not been cleaned since the fire will be tested. Public health experts will also do air testing for mercury vapors. As part of the indoor testing, other potential sources of indoor air pollution like tobacco smoke, fireplaces, space heaters, gas logs and candles will be identified.

This round of testing is to screen for any potential problems resulting from the fire. It is not uncommon to find background contaminants in areas that have never been involved in a fire. If potential problems are identified, then more in-depth testing will be done. State officials hope to complete the testing and analysis within two weeks.

More information about the state’s response and actions concerning the EQ site, cleanup and monitoring can be found online at <http://www.enr.state.nc.us/html/apex.html> .

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