

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

March 31, 2009

Dear Berkeley Resident:

Thank you for contacting EPA and providing additional information to consider in the selection of schools for our Air Toxics Monitoring Schools Initiative. As you are aware, recent media reports have raised important questions about the air quality outside schools near large industrial facilities. In response, EPA has made a commitment to swiftly investigate and monitor the air for specific chemicals at selected schools across the nation. By using the latest emissions inventory and modeling efforts, and the latest monitoring equipment, EPA intends to quickly get a more accurate snapshot of the potential exposure of our nation's children to toxic air pollutants.

To prioritize schools for monitoring, EPA considered a number of factors, including USA Today's results, our own comprehensive screening analyses using the National Air Toxics Assessment (www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/natamain/), and additional air toxics monitoring and modeling work performed by state, tribal, and local air pollution control agencies. Based on this analysis of areas with potentially high air toxics impacts, EPA identified 62 schools for initial monitoring. The complete list of schools can be found at www.epa.gov/schoolair/.

We did not select any schools in the Berkeley area for the initial list of school monitoring. In making our selection of schools, EPA carefully considered the strong response from residents in West Berkeley advocating for monitoring in the vicinity of Pacific Steel and Casting. Our decision to not include Berkeley schools in our initial list of school monitoring sites is based upon several factors:

- First, our initial screening analysis did not show air toxics levels in West Berkeley among the highest levels nationally.
- Second, under California's Hotspots Information and Assessment Act (AB2588), a human health risk assessment for Pacific Steel and Casting was released in October 2008. The risk assessment did not predict significant air toxics impacts at nearby schools. Impacts have been reduced substantially since 2005 emissions controls were installed.
- Third, the Bay Area AQMD has recently completed a more comprehensive, full year of air toxics monitoring at 6th and Camelia Streets in Berkeley, which is within 1000 feet of the source.

Even though Berkeley schools are not included on the initial list of sites to monitor, EPA will continue to work closely with Berkeley residents and the Bay Area AQMD on air quality concerns in West Berkeley. By invitation, we participated in the February 2, 2009 forum, *The Science of Air Quality in West Berkeley*. Please let us know if there are future meetings where our attendance would be helpful. EPA is also working closely with Bay Area AQMD to interpret the air toxics monitoring data from the 6th and Camelia Streets monitoring site and we will soon make the results of this analysis available to the public.

In addition to air quality monitoring, EPA has several existing programs available to help make schools the healthiest environments possible. These programs address indoor air quality, pesticide use, chemicals in schools, air pollution from school buses and other environmental issues. If you wish to learn more about these programs, please visit cfpub.epa.gov/schools/index.cfm.

If you have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or Mike Bandrowski, Chief of the Air Toxics, Radiation, and Indoor Air Office for EPA Region 9 at (415) 947-4194 or bandrowski.mike@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Allyn Stern, Deputy Director
Air Division
U.S. EPA, Region 9