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Author Fecteau, Lois

Corporate Author

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PCB experts seek new tests *No conclusion on building*

By LOIS FECTEAU

NEW YORK — More testing needs to be done to determine whether the contaminated Binghamton State Office Building can be cleaned or will have to be destroyed, a panel of experts concluded yesterday.

"I don't think we've gotten past that point (of determining if the building can be cleaned). We're talking about dioxins and furans, compounds about which there are a lot of gaps in our knowledge," Dr. Clark W. Heath Jr. said at a news conference after the panel's meeting yesterday at LaGuardia Airport.

"The toxicity of the soot has to be addressed before you can answer the question of cleaning the building," said Heath, director of the federal Center for Disease Control's Bureau of Chronic Disease, who chaired one of the panel's afternoon work sessions.

"We agree there needs to be much more comprehensive sampling of the building before this can be dealt with adequately," said Dr. Arthur C. Upton, chairman of New York University Medical Center's Department of Environmental Medicine, who chaired the other work session.

Glenn E. Haughie, director of the state Office of Public Health, said he considers the meeting a success even though no conclusions about the building were reached.

"It was successful in that we got some of the best minds available on this subject together," Haughie said.

Haughie said the state should not give up on the problem despite the complexities it poses.

"We cannot be paralyzed by problems of this sort. The amount of information needed will probably never be available. But at some point we have to assemble what we know and make a decision. That de-

cision may be that we cannot make a decision," Haughie said.

Haughie and two members of the panel will address the Broome County Medical Society at 9:45 a.m. today on the health aspects of the contamination at "PCB Information Day" at the Ramada Inn in Binghamton.

The state had asked the panel to determine the acceptable level of exposure to the chemicals polluting the state building. Panel members were reluctant to do that, saying it is a sociological and political decision.

"I would think it would not be appropriate for a panel of scientists to decide this," Upton said. "This is a regulatory question, a societal question. What we can perhaps do is define the levels of risk."

Most panel members said they did not have enough information on the state building contamination to evaluate the risk.

"You do need some biologic data on the soot. Once we have that then we can begin talking about risk," said Major Alvin L. Young, who has done extensive research on dioxin, one of the toxic chemicals polluting the building.

Young said he is frustrated the panel did not come up with more concrete suggestions.

"I came prepared to address the issues and we didn't do that. There are things that could be done right now. . . I was going to suggest a cleaning regime. I think they ought to try a number of different cleaning techniques," Young said.

Young, an Air Force troubleshooter, said he will give the state a plan to follow in the absence of specific suggestions by the panel.

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PCB panel—

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"New York state might think we avoided question number 1 (determining the acceptable level). We did spend a lot of time on it and we didn't come up with a number," Heath said.

After the meeting Broome County Executive Carl S. Young said he was satisfied with the discussion.

"I'm satisfied that a process is under way, that there seems to be a real effort to address everything," he said, adding that the contamination has to be kept in perspective.

"When I hear people talking about tearing the building down, I wonder where their heads are at," he added. "This has to be kept in the realm of reality. We don't live in operating rooms."