



HEALTH ADVISORY # 83

Formaldehyde Statement -- Dr. Tierney

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and other Healthcare Facilities

FROM: Letitia Tierney, MD JD, Commissioner for Public Health and State Health Officer, Bureau for Public Health, WVDHHR

DATE: January 29, 2014

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

Scott Simonton's presentation to the West Virginia Joint Legislative Committee today is totally unfounded and does not speak to the health and safety of West Virginians.

Subject matter experts who have been assisting West Virginia through this entire emergency response state that the only way possible for formaldehyde to come from MCHM is if it were combusted at 500°F.

The World Health Organization (WHO) states formaldehyde is the most frequent aldehyde found in nature and is naturally measurable in air and water. Formaldehyde is created through the normal breakdown cycle of plants and animals. Formaldehyde dissolves easily in water and does not last a long time in water.

Additionally, formaldehyde is naturally produced in very small amounts in our bodies as a part of our normal, everyday metabolism and causes no harm. It can also be found in the air that we breathe at home and at work, in the food we eat, and in some products that we put on our skin.

Formaldehyde is found in many products used every day around the house such as antiseptics, medicines, cosmetics, dish-washing liquids, fabric softeners, shoe-care agents, carpet cleaners, glues and adhesives, lacquers, paper, plastics, and some types of wood products.

We are unaware of the specifics of how this study was conducted, including sampling procedures, protocol and methodology, and would also be interested in the possibility of some other issue affecting the testing of water at the establishment indicated.

Everyone has been affected by this water crisis and public health is of the utmost importance. Mr. Simonton has not been part of the integral team of water testing officials from numerous states, local and private agencies working non-stop since January 9. His opinion is personal but speaks in no official capacity.

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

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