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No evidence of harm from repaired school buses

An assessment by the Oregon Department of Human Services State Public Health Division has found no evidence that children are being harmed by contaminants on buses that were in a 2006 fire at the Salem-Keizer School District school bus facility. The fire destroyed seven buses and heavily damaged five others. Damaged buses were repaired, cleaned, and placed back into service.

No children or parents of children riding buses have reported any health problems to the school district or to the health division. However after some drivers complained of nausea, headaches, burning noses and throats, a cough and trouble breathing after driving fire-affected buses, the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division (OR-OSHA) opened an investigation. Subsequently, the Salem-Keizer School District asked the Oregon State Public Health Division's Environmental Health Assessment Program (EHAP) to evaluate the possible risk to children who ride the buses.

A public meeting to discuss the assessment is scheduled for Sept. 18 at 6 p.m. at the Support Services Center, 2575 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Or.

Hard copies of the report will be available for review at the Salem-Keizer Association of Classified Employees Office, 2540 Coral Ave. NE, Salem, Or., 97305, and at the Salem-Keizer School District Transportation Department, 998 Hawthorne Ave. NE, Salem, Or., 97301. The report is also available electronically on the web at <http://www.healthoregon.org/ehap>. This

document is open for public comment. Please send comments to ehap.info@state.or.us by Oct. 7, 2008.

In its assessment, EHAP used data that had been collected by OR-OSHA, which focused on measuring chemicals commonly associated with symptoms reported by the drivers. These chemicals include carbon monoxide, benzene, particulate matter, diesel exhaust, limonene, undecane and phenol. OR-OSHA wasn't able to determine what might be causing the bus drivers' health problems.

EHAP's assessment found that carbon monoxide, benzene, particulate matter, diesel exhaust, limonene, undecane and phenol posed no apparent public health hazard to children riding the buses.

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