

Craig Witherspoon, Ed. D.  
Superintendent



Aug. 15, 2011

Subject: Update on Soil Cleanup Action

Dear Hudson K-8 School Parents:

As you probably are aware, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided oversight for soil sampling on the Hudson K-8 School campus in 2009 and 2010. The soil sampling examined two contaminants on the school grounds and unacceptable levels were found. I've attached some background information (refer to second page).

Beginning last spring, Walter Coke Inc. removed contaminated soil on several areas of the Hudson campus, replaced it with clean backfill and installed new grass.

We have received good news from the U.S. EPA. The U.S. EPA has completed its evaluation of a report on this soil cleanup at Hudson submitted by Walter Coke. The EPA has concluded that the areas at Hudson that were sampled and found to be contaminated with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and arsenic have been successfully cleaned up.

It is reassuring as we begin the 2011-2012 school year to know that the soil cleanup project at Hudson achieved the desired effect. If you have further questions, EPA has proposed to meet with concerned parents in the near future. If you are interested, please contact Jeanette Verduin of EPA at 404-562-8572. A date/time will be established and you will be contacted with details to attend this informal EPA question/answer session.

I assure you that your children's health, safety and welfare are a top priority to the Birmingham City School System. We will keep you informed if any updated information becomes available. Feel free to use the contact information outlined (refer to second page).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Witherspoon", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Craig Witherspoon, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Attachment

### **Background Information (from April 6, 2011 Parent Letter)**

In 2009, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Division required Walter Coke Inc. (formerly Sloss Industries) to perform a soil sampling investigation at multiple community locations near its facility, including around the old Hudson school building. Tests showed that polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) were present at unacceptable levels. These contaminants can come from a variety of sources, both industrial and non-industrial. Some of the non-industrial sources, which can come from neighboring areas, can include exhaust from cars, burning leaves and trash, roofing tar and even from outdoor grilling and cigarette smoke.

By the time the results of those samples were verified, the new school had opened, the old building had been demolished and significant landscaping had been done on the site. In August 2010, EPA required Walter Coke to conduct additional soil sampling. The second round of soil sampling results showed improved but still unacceptable levels of PAHs in some soils at the rear of the school, which had now been fenced in. This resulted in Walter Coke removing the affected soils and replacing the soil with clean fill. Sod was replaced on parts of the Hudson campus. Update: The soil cleanup project lasted between March 10, 2011 to June 8, 2011.

### **For More Information:**

**Soil Investigation and Cleanup Issues:** Contact Brian Holtzclaw, EPA Community Engagement Coordinator, at 404-562-8684 or [holtzclaw.brian@epa.gov](mailto:holtzclaw.brian@epa.gov). Note that the Walter Coke "Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup Report for the Hudson School," (dated June 17, 2011), and other information on efforts to investigate and address the soil contamination issues can be found at this EPA web-site:

[www.epa.gov/region4/foia/readingroom/rcra\\_community/walter.html](http://www.epa.gov/region4/foia/readingroom/rcra_community/walter.html)

**Medical Issues:** Contact your physician, the Alabama Department of Health, local health clinic, local health department, or the Southeast Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) at (404) 727-9428 or [www.sph.emory.edu/PEHSU](http://www.sph.emory.edu/PEHSU). Robert J. Geller, MD, Pediatric Toxicologist who is affiliated with the PEHSU, stated, "The effect of exposure to any hazardous substance depends upon the dose, the duration, how you are exposed, personal traits and habits. In this situation, given the vegetation and limited contact with soils, data suggests that the dose posed little risk in the short term, but cleaning up soils prevents longer term exposures."

**School Issues:** Contact Principal's Office, 231-3000; or Bob Morgan, Director of Capital Projects, 231-2082.

**Walter Coke Issues:** Their hotline is 1-855-892-5837 (toll free). For other matters, please contact Michael Monahan at (205) 745-2628 or [mmonhaham@waltercoke.com](mailto:mmonhaham@waltercoke.com).