Keene State College News

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Contact: Robin Dutcher
603-358-2119
rdutcher@keene.edu

College Implements Program to Eliminate Playground Paint Chips

KEENE, N.H., 7/27/07 - Keene State College is installing a fence around the back of Elliot Center, which borders the Child Development Center (CDC) playground, as part of a multistep lead abatement program to address paint chips that have fallen from the trim of the historic building. Bud Winsor, assistant director of the Physical Plant Department, expects the fence to arrive next week, well before children start sessions on August 27.

"We are thoroughly inspecting the facility used by the CDC to assure that all affected areas are treated," said President Helen Giles-Gee. "The entire interior of the CDC was recently renovated, and we are confident that all interior surfaces have been encapsulated."

Ellen Edge, director of the CDC, sent a letter to all parents on Thursday to inform them and to announce a meeting on Wednesday, August 8 (to see the letter visit www.keene.edu/cdc/). Sylvie Rice, the College environmental health and safety coordinator, will be on hand to address any concerns and answer questions.

Last spring, after a concerned parent noticed that paint chips had fallen from Elliott Center onto the ground between the building and surrounding shrubs, the College retained Covino Environmental Associates, Inc., to determine whether there was lead in the paint and/or nearby soils.

Analytical results indicate that the concentration of lead in soils at the playground are within acceptable limits; however, lead was detected in various paint chips collected near the building. Analytical results indicate that the paint chip samples contain between 8.53 and 16.17 percent lead by weight. The U.S. EPA defines a dangerous level of lead in paint as greater than 1 percent by weight.

At the CDC, 1- and 2-year-olds - the group at greatest risk for elevated blood lead levels - are closely supervised and spend most of their outside play time in a fully enclosed toddler play yard that is located approximately 40 feet from the building and are not in direct contact with the area where the chips were discovered. The main concern with paint chips is that children under the age of 6 might unknowingly eat them. Major renovations of the interior spaces of the CDC were completed in 2005 and 2006, effectively eliminating any potential lead exposure in the inside areas.

The College has begun a multistep program to address the situation. There will be:

The installation of a 4-foot-high fence approximately 10 feet from the building around the three sides of the playground that abut the building to limit access to the impacted area. This fence will be installed well in advance of the opening of the CDC on August 27.

A training program for CDC staff and student workers to assist them in identifying paint chips and how to handle disposal.

Regular inspection of the playground to identify and remove any paint chips.

The development of a long-term strategy to permanently cover or remove lead-based paint from the trim of the building that borders the playground. This strategy may include replacing all of the impacted windows and casings and/or covering the lead surfaces with weather-resistant material, which should be caulked airtight. Removing the loose and flaking paint is not recommended since significant airborne dust and debris would likely result from this process. After the permanent solution is implemented, additional ground cover will be spread over the 10-foot buffer zone (between the building and the fence) to permanently bury any remaining lead-based paint chips.

Reviewing and testing of all equipment and products at the CDC to ensure that they are lead-free.
For more information, call CDC Director Ellen Edge at 603-358-2232.

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