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## **PCB Levels Spark Worry / At or past limit in 7 Bethpage yards**

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State health officials have found contaminated soil at or above federal limits at seven houses adjacent to Bethpage Community Park, which town officials closed in May after learning of elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs.

Of the 20 yards tested on July 2, two had PCB levels well above the federal guidelines of one part per million. One of the properties had a level 017 58 parts per million, while another had a level of 10 parts per million, said Claire Pospisil, a spokeswoman for the department.

Samples from five other houses had levels at or slightly above the federal standard, while four others had levels below it. Nine houses had no trace of PCBs in their soil samples.

PCBs are toxic compounds no longer produced in the United States. Exposure to them can cause cancer, especially in animals, and other illnesses.

Health officials began calling residents to inform them of their test results Thursday and are also mailing the results.

Many Sycamore Avenue residents had been alarmed since Town of Oyster Bay officials padlocked the 19-acre Bethpage Community Park ~~iii~~ May which is adjacent to the Northrop Grumman Corp. site.

Grumman, which once used PCBs to dry waste materials from its metal parts production operation and which is closing its manufacturing facilities, was required to test areas on and near its property for possible spills or other contaminations.

Sycamore Avenue resident Elaine Heitner, 74, was upset to learn that her PCB level is 1.7 parts per million.

"What I want to know is, are they going to take care of this?" she asked. "I'm on the verge of selling my house and I don't know how this is going to affect me."

Others expressed relief at their news but concern about what their neighbors' contamination could mean.

"I'm glad that I fell into the negative category, especially with four children playing in the yard," Donna Conway said.

**Thanos Papanicolaou**, assistant professor at Washington State University, said PCB-contaminated soil itself does not necessarily pose a large health hazard.

"You got to go there and dig in the ground in order for the PCBs to be dangerous," he said. "Just walking on it is not going to do anything.

The Bethpage houses also were tested for chromium and other heavy metals, which at high doses can damage the brain and nervous system. Pospisil said although higher-than-normal chromium levels were detected in some soil samples, all were well below any level that could cause health hazards.

She said health officials talked to each homeowner about minimizing their exposure PCBs by maintaining their lawns and avoiding digging or any other direct soil contact.

Jennifer Post, a spokeswoman for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, said officials there are in discussions with Grumman and the Navy about conducting additional tests and paying for any cleanup of the contaminated sites.

"We believe that they are responsible for this contamination and we've asked that they work with us on developing a plan," Post said.

Grumman officials could not be reached for comment Friday.

Staff writer Pat Burson contributed to this story.