

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Testing Finds No Public Health Problem With Arsenic in Parks

June 20, 2008 -- Following the closure of Swann Park because of arsenic contamination, Baltimore City has completed its review of city parks and found no other public health risks associated with arsenic. The review was conducted in coordination with the Maryland Department of the Environment with input from federal and local experts.

“Because of its proximity to a former chemical manufacturing facility, Swann Park is unique,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “This review is reassuring to all of us who regularly enjoy the parks in the city.”

Last summer and fall, the Maryland Department of the Environment conducted spot testing of 11 parks. This review was released in January 2008. None of the test results were close to the range of Swann Park, which reached thousands of parts per million of arsenic.

As planned, the city (through its consultant Environmental Resources Management, Inc.) conducted follow-up testing at four parks. This testing has revealed no levels of arsenic of public health significance. Results were reviewed with senior scientists at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in the federal government and local experts at Johns Hopkins.

Meanwhile, Swann Park’s remediation is proceeding on schedule. Excavation of soils is near completion, and air monitoring results have not shown any problems.

“We appreciate the work of many agencies to check on the park system,” said Wanda Durden, the new director of the Department of Parks & Recreation. “We are looking forward to a great summer.”

Recommended Links:

- Maryland Department of the Environment Press release on Parks Report (January 2008): <http://www.mde.state.md.us/PressReleases/1062.html>
- Maryland Department of the Environment Parks Report http://www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/Screening%20Study%20of%20Surface%20Soil_revised112507.pdf
- Environmental Resources Management, Inc. Parks Report <http://www.baltimorehealth.org>

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