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Mercury found in rubberized floors



School officials closed the Joseph J. Catena School gym and are ordering testing after learning that the rubberized floor is emitting mercury vapors. Superintendent Neal Dickstein said that the gym was tested last month after the facilities manager heard that rubberized floors can contain mercury.

Group→	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
↓Period																		
1	1 H																	2 He
2	3 Li	4 Be											5 B	6 C	7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne
3	11 Na	12 Mg											13 Al	14 Si	15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar
4	19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr
5	37 Rb	38 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe
6	55 Cs	56 Ba		72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn
7	87 Fr	88 Ra		104 Rf	105 Db	106 Sg	107 Bh	108 Hs	109 Mt	110 Ds	111 Rg	112 Cn	113 Uut	114 Fl	115 Uup	116 Lv	117 Uus	118 Uuo
Lanthanides			57 La	58 Ce	59 Pr	60 Nd	61 Pm	62 Sm	63 Eu	64 Gd	65 Tb	66 Dy	67 Ho	68 Er	69 Tm	70 Yb	71 Lu	
Actinides			89 Ac	90 Th	91 Pa	92 U	93 Np	94 Pu	95 Am	96 Cm	97 Bk	98 Cf	99 Es	100 Fm	101 Md	102 No	103 Lr	

The gym was shut down Sept. 21 after a report came back showing air samples tested positive for mercury, according to a letter sent home to parents. In a letter sent to parents Monday, Dickstein said officials lowered the temperature in the gym below 72 degrees and increased ventilation in hopes of reducing the mercury vapors. "We have been working collaboratively with a variety of stakeholders to determine a course of action that prioritizes the safety of the entire school community," Dickstein wrote. Catena has around 500 students and 70 staff members, Dickstein said. Some of those students and staff are from Freehold Borough's school district, which rents out rooms from the township school district to alleviate overcrowding in its own school buildings.

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Gym teachers can pursue mercury testing, covered by the district health insurance. The district isn't currently testing students for mercury exposure. Several companies manufactured and installed synthetic, rubberized flooring to seal concrete floors between the 1960s and the 1980s, according to the Centers for Disease Control's Agency. The practice was discontinued in the mid-1980s, but many of these floors remain in place today, according to a statement from the New Jersey School Boards Association in 2017 after the Bernice B. Young elementary school in Burlington Township found mercury in its gym floor. The school district closed the gym for nearly a year while it replaced the floor, according to The Burlington County Times.

"Recent reports have demonstrated that some emit notable amounts of elemental mercury vapor, which has raised questions about inhalation health risks, particularly for children in schools," the NJSBA wrote in the statement. The testing in September cost around \$5,000, Dickstein said. The district plans to continue testing to determine whether mercury has spread to the concrete layer below or the hallways outside of the gym.

Dickstein said the vapors are likely contained to the gym because the ventilation unit only services that part of the building and isn't connected to other ducts in the building. It is unclear how school officials will address the mercury problem. School officials plan to consult state health officials after the next testing results come back before they announce the next steps. At that point, Dickstein said, he hopes to host an information session with parents and a state health official. "We're trying to be proactive with parents and keep them informed," he said.

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Press Release

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