



TO: Bennington-area health care providers

FROM: Cort Lohff, MD, MPH
State Epidemiologist

THROUGH: Marcia Russo
Health Department District Director

DATE: September 15, 2006

RE: Medical screening of employees of the Bennington State Office
Building

In June 2006, the Vermont Department of Health initiated an investigation of health concerns among employees of the Bennington State Office Building. The primary health concern was identified as sarcoidosis. Thus far, the Health Department's investigation has included a written health questionnaire, a building inspection and environmental testing.

Preliminary findings from the questionnaire indicate that the percentage of employees reporting physician-diagnosed asthma – and the percentage of employees reporting symptoms consistent with asthma (wheezing, coughing attacks and shortness of breath) – is much higher than would be expected. To help confirm these findings and to provide employees with more complete and detailed information about their own respiratory health, the Health Department has secured the assistance of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to provide pulmonary function testing. The specific tests include baseline spirometry, methacholine challenge, bronchodilator administration and carbon monoxide diffusing capacity.

Testing is scheduled to begin next Tuesday, September 19 and continue through Thursday, September 28. Testing is being provided at no cost to the employees. All participants will be required to review and sign a standard consent form. NIOSH will be providing individuals with their own results three weeks after the completion of the tests. We are encouraging individuals to share these results with their physicians.

Should you have any questions about this testing or the investigation itself, please contact me at 800-640-4374 or Marcia Russo at 447-3531. Additional information on this investigation can be found at: http://healthvermont.gov/local/Bennington_building.aspx.