

## Covington Middle School

On Friday, January 31, 2025, the Region 6 Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) Hazardous Material Officer and The Roanoke Valley Regional Hazmat Team working with local emergency personnel responded to Covington Middle School for an unknown odor. The building had been evacuated of all students and staff. Emergency personnel entered the building and began air sampling and monitoring throughout the entire school. At that point, no hazardous detection was noted by any of the air monitoring equipment utilized.

While attempting to mirror daily operations, the boilers and HVAC systems were activated and operating while air sampling was conducted on all floors, boiler rooms, closets, drains, gymnasium, above drop ceilings, auditorium, and cafeteria area of the school. Results of air monitoring found no abnormal or hazardous readings.

The VDEM Hazmat Officer and Regional Hazmat team requested the school to remain evacuated with boilers and HVAC system continue to operate to allow build up of unknown odor/gas to accumulate to assist in determining cause. The building remained closed on Saturday, February 1.

On Sunday, February 2, Region 6 Hazardous Material Officer and members of the Roanoke Valley Regional Hazardous Materials Team arrived to assist local responders. Air monitoring was again conducted throughout the building with same air monitoring equipment along with stationary detectors placed throughout the building to relay real time air monitoring data. Air monitoring results found no abnormal or hazardous readings.

Personnel requested that all natural gas fueled appliances be started by maintenance with hazmat personnel collecting air monitoring readings upon start up. While starting up a natural gas fueled oven in the kitchen area by maintenance personnel, hazmat personnel conducting air monitoring experienced an alarm for high levels of carbon monoxide in the kitchen.

The oven was not burning the natural gas efficiently and was producing carbon monoxide. The overhead exhaust fan was not operating properly, as well. After finding issues with the oven and fans, the gas line was shut off and Columbia gas was notified and arrived on scene to assess any concerns with gas supply.

Air monitoring continued throughout the building with no additional abnormal/ hazardous findings and Columbia gas inspected the gas line in cafeteria.

Once the oven and gas line were isolated, no other hazards were found. The building was then turned over to the AHPS.



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