

# Health inspection at three schools

## Air quality, mold create fear

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Liberty - Federal health officials will meet with Liberty School District administrators next week to plan an inspection of the district's three schools, Superintendent Lawrence Clarke said.

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, or NIOSH, will inspect the schools because of concerns over air quality and mold.

"We hope NIOSH can give us credible information so we can reassure the public and make sure our buildings are safe," Clarke said at Monday night's school board meeting.

The Liberty Faculty Association, the district's teachers union, sent requests to NIOSH for an evaluation as early as last September, said union president Tim Hamblin.

The union's request included reports of coughing, congestion, chronic sinus infections, headaches, eye irritation and dizziness from about 10 middle school and 20 elementary school teachers.

"The things you would have someplace where the air quality wasn't good," Hamblin said.

NIOSH will make a full report to the school board that Clarke expects to be made public.

The district has been criticized by teachers, parents and residents for

requiring Freedom of Information requests for copies of two previous air quality studies done at the middle school in May and August of 2004. Both reports showed traces of potentially toxic mold.

Middle School librarian Angela Page and supporters came to the Monday meeting to urge district action on what they say is poor air quality in the middle and elementary schools.

Page started working in the middle school when it opened in 1991 and says in 2000 her health began to deteriorate, a problem she attributes to mold growing in the library caused by water seeping through the roof.

A resolution was passed by district voters in May to spend \$375,000 to fix the water issues at the middle school, which have been a problem since the building opened.

Page did not return to the library this school year and last November a workers' compensation judge ruled that she had a work-related injury, a hypersensitive reaction to molds, vapors, and even perfumes. Page, who describes her illness as, "a poisoning," took breathers from a respirator in-between sentences when she addressed the board.

"I get dizzy. I can't think. I can't operate," Page said Monday. "I don't want the health of our kids' brains, lungs and kidneys damaged like mine."

"I don't want this to happen to anybody else," she said. About half the room gave her a standing ovation.



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Angela Page of Liberty with her mask. Page worked in the Liberty Middle School library and says her health deteriorated because of mold in the library caused by water seeping through the roof. Leaks at the middle school have been a problem since it opened in 1991. The district has earmarked \$375,000 to fix the leak problems.