



## Last 6 Days

From: News and Views | City Beat |  
Thursday, February 28, 2002

# EPA Aide: Poor Air in Schools

By ALISON GENDAR  
Daily News Staff Writer

**A** watchdog for the federal Environmental Protection Agency said at least two lower Manhattan schools had been recontaminated by World Trade Center debris and advised the agency to take swift action — including evacuating schools, if necessary.

Robert Martin, the national ombudsman for the EPA, released his findings yesterday — a day before the last two evacuated schools, Public School 89 and the High School for Economics and Finance, were to reopen.

Downtown schools "are being recontaminated with hazardous material," he said, citing recent tests done at Stuyvesant High School and PS 89 that found elevated levels of lead.

Catie Marshall, a spokeswoman for the Board of Education, said, based on tests done by the board and city, state and federal agencies, "We are confident our children and teachers are not at risk in these buildings."

School officials attributed the higher levels of lead at Stuyvesant and PS 89 to dust tracked in by students or through an open window. But even those samples showed levels that posed no health risk to students, officials said.

Still, the areas were cleaned and retested.

Since Sept. 11, the board has waged an aggressive program to clean seven evacuated schools.

Each was cleaned for asbestos, even though asbestos samples were not found. Ventilation systems were upgraded, dust samples taken and indoor and outdoor air quality monitored daily.

Martin's report recommended that a barge with Trade Center debris

docked off West St. behind Stuyvesant be moved and that school ventilation systems be continuously cleaned or replaced.

The ombudsman has become a controversial figure at the EPA since he accused agency chief Christie Whitman of trying to muzzle him.

Whitman is seeking to fold the ombudsman job into the EPA inspector general's office.

What do you think? Post your comments on our [Forums](#).

### Daily News Services

Click on any service and enjoy shopping online!



[Back to Top](#)