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THE STATE

FUNGUS GROWING AT TWO PICKENS COUNTY SCHOOLS

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The Associated Press

Two more Upstate schools may have problems with fungi and one may have to be closed while repairs to the air system are made, environmental inspectors say.

Samples collected at Daniel High School and McKissick Elementary School, both in Pickens County, show active fungal growth and will require immediate cleanup, according to preliminary test results.

A week ago potentially dangerous levels of mold were found at Buena Vista Elementary School in Greenville. Students will spend the next four months in portable classrooms during a \$1 million decontamination of the main building.

The problems prompted about 45 people to turn out Monday for the first "Concerned Citizens Regarding Fungal Growth in Schools" meeting, where the group said air quality concerns should be a priority.

The cleanup at Daniel High could be extensive and may require closing the school to avoid further exposure to students and faculty, said Lee Cappell, president of Environmental Studies & Engineering Inc., which collected and analyzed samples from the schools.

Early results show fungal growth on ceiling tiles and ventilators.

Cappell said the ventilators' interior linings must be replaced and crews may have to put a big plastic bubble around the school while they clean up.

Such measures will probably not have to be taken at McKissick, where ceiling tiles and the air handler will have to be cleaned, Cappell said. District officials have said they will replace old carpet and the leaky roof at McKissick.

School officials said no action will be taken until they receive a formal report. Results were expected to be finalized on Wednesday.

"When we get the written report, we'll take it down, study it, see what needs to be done, and whatever they recommend, we'll do what we can do and what we can't do, we'll hire a vendor that can," said Superintendent Duke Hucks.

On Monday, the district hired a Spartanburg-based air control firm, S & ME, to test Easley High School and Forest Acres Elementary. Hucks said the air monitoring at Easley High will begin as soon as S & ME is available.

Pickens County officials had said there was no problem with that school's air quality, though one teacher thinks she developed a fungus in her lungs after teaching in the basement for 12 years.

Hucks had said a report completed in November 1997 showed the school was safe.

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