

**Question on Notice
No. 1099
Asked on 9 June 2006**

MR RICKUSS asked the Minister for Emergency Services (MR PURCELL) -

QUESTION:

With reference to the plight of Ipswich based fire fighting crews who were called to assist other crews at the Binary Industries chemical fire and as these officers did not have the required personal protective equipment to fight this type of fire—

- (1) What measures have been put in place to monitor the health of the fire fighters who attended this incident?
- (2) Why were fire fighters' uniforms affected by this incident cleaned at the local drycleaners and not properly decontaminated?
- (3) What were the PCB levels and other airborne contaminant levels monitored by the Response Advice for Chemical Emergencies (RACE) unit?
- (4) In the interests of the firefighters and community residents, will he release the report of the RACE unit and the other reports which it holds into this incident?

ANSWER:

Operational crews from Ipswich who attended the Binary Chemicals incident were issued with the required personal protective equipment. This personal protective equipment is the same standard as that issued to all permanent firefighters in the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and includes chemical protective boots and the standard "turnout" ensemble. The fire appliance from Ipswich also has the required number of self contained breathing apparatus, with these being available for the crew to wear.

- (1) In order to address health issues and concerns of crews that attended this particular incident, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has engaged a medical practitioner who has extensive experience in the chemical industry. This medical practitioner will be conducting information sessions on health and safety. All personnel who attended the Binary Industries' fire will be invited to attend one of these information sessions.

Further, a project has been established under the direction of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Deputy Commissioner and with assistance from Organisational Health, the medical consultant and other key stakeholders, to conduct research into a health surveillance program for all firefighters.

- (2) The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has arrangements with industrial laundries to clean their uniforms and follow the cleaning recommendations of manufacturer. These industrial laundries regularly clean

or decontaminate workers clothing that may be soiled by a wide range of materials from many industries within Queensland.

The uniforms of Ipswich firefighters who assisted at the Binary Industries fire were laundered by an industrial laundry in Ipswich in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

(3) I have been advised that there is no evidence that Poly-Chlorinated Biphenyls were present at Binary Industries on the night of the fire.

Extensive air monitoring was undertaken by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Scientific Unit (formerly RACE) at the incident and downwind of the fire for the duration of the incident. The information obtained was applied to protect the emergency service personnel and the community. Because many measurements were undertaken at various locations and times during the fire, only the highest measurements obtained on the night of the fire are tabled:

- Volatile organics less than 2 parts per million, formaldehyde less than 0.14 parts per million;
- Inorganic oxides like carbon monoxide less than 10 parts per million;
- Oxygen normal atmospheric concentration 20.9 per cent; and
- Phosphorous based materials like "pesticides" or phosphorus oxide less than 625 micro grams per cubic metre.

(4) The Incident report written by the Scientific Unit has been subject to Freedom of Information requests and has been released by the Premier on 23 June 2006.