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## Frequently Asked Questions Park Avenue Warehouse Fire

### **What agencies are involved in response efforts related to the fire?**

The St. Louis Fire Department is serving as the lead agency to response efforts related to the fire. Other response agencies include the City of St. Louis Department of Health, Missouri Department of Natural Resources and U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

### **Is air monitoring being conducted on the site?**

Air monitoring conducted by the St. Louis Fire Department starting November 15, 2017, detected carbon monoxide (CO). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified the most common symptoms of CO poisoning as headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. CO symptoms are often described as “flu-like.”

### **The smoke from the fire drifted above my home. Am I safe?**

Smoke contains millions of tiny particles that can make your eyes water, nose run, and make you cough. For most healthy people these symptoms will go away when the smoke is gone. If you live in the area of the fire, you are advised to limit your exposure to the smoke by staying indoors. If you must go outside, it is best to wear a mask or leave the area as quickly as possible. HVAC systems can also be a means of taking smoke into the home, so the systems should be shut down or their use limited. Not everyone who is exposed to thick smoke will have health problems. The level and duration of exposure, age, individual susceptibility (including the presence of absence of pre-existing lung or heart disease), and other factors play significant roles in determining whether or not someone will experience smoke-related health problems. Most healthy adults will recover quickly from smoke exposures and will not suffer long-term consequences.

### **I have had a sore throat and breathing problem since the fire? Should I see a doctor?**

If you feel like you should see a doctor, please do. The symptoms you have described most likely are caused by smoke inhalation.

### **What should I do if I am having a health problem from the smoke?**

If you have a medical emergency from smoke, you should call 911 or go to the hospital emergency room immediately.

### **My bedding and clothes smell like smoke. How do I get rid of the smell in cloth?**

We advise that you wash any clothes that smell like smoke

### **What do I need to know about my pet’s health regarding the fire?**

If you live near the site of the warehouse fire or continue to smell smoke from the fire, it is best to keep your pets indoors. Smoke can irritate a pet’s eyes and respiratory tract. If you are concerned about your pet’s health, it is best to contact your veterinarian.

### **I left my home after the fire started and have not been back. Is it safe for me to return?**

If you left your home because of the fire it is safe to return. As a precautionary measure you may want to replace the filter in your HVAC system.

**I live near the Park Avenue warehouse and have debris from the fire on my property. What should I do?**

The EPA arrived November 17, 2017 to begin testing debris samples for asbestos. Additional information will be coming regarding removal of debris left from the fire. The debris will look like ash or paper, and crumbles to ash easily. The dust from the crumbling ash may contain asbestos.

The health risks of asbestos are almost entirely from inhaling asbestos fibers in the air. Any asbestos in debris that has fallen to the ground and is not airborne poses very little risk.

If testing reveals that the materials contain or are suspected of containing asbestos, additional information and instructions will be provided by the City of St. Louis Department of Health.

If testing reveals there is no evidence of asbestos in the debris or the debris is not suspected of containing asbestos you can remove the materials. As an additional precaution when removing the debris, you can wet the material with a squirt bottle before picking it up, placing it in a plastic bag, and disposing of it in the a trash receptacle.

**Why is the EPA involved?**

Based upon lessons learned from the 2017 Clemens House fire and the age of the Park Avenue warehouse the City of St. Louis Department of Health decided to take the precautionary measure of making the request to the EPA to conduct the analysis.

**When did the EPA become involved?**

On November 16, in consultation with the Fire Department, the City of St. Louis Department of Health made a request to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct sampling for asbestos. Representatives from the EPA began collecting fire debris samples to test for evidence of asbestos on Friday, November 17.

**What should I do with debris from the fire?**

Residents are being advised to not handle debris from the fire. This includes any material which looks like ash or paper which crumbles to dust upon contact. This is precautionary until it can be determined that there is no evidence of asbestos. The City of St. Louis Department of Health wants to error on the side of precaution until it can be determined that there is no evidence of asbestos in the debris.

**What are the health effects of exposure to asbestos?**

Historically, the chance of developing harmful health effects due to exposure to asbestos containing materials requires prolonged (as in multiple years) exposure. Health risk from short-term encounters with asbestos containing materials is almost negligible.

**I'm pretty healthy, is there anything for me to worry about?**

Smoke contains millions of tiny particles that can make your eyes water, nose run, and make you cough.

For most healthy people, these symptoms will go away when the smoke is gone. Decreasing activity will help to minimize possible impacts.

**Who can I contact if I have additional questions?**

If you have additional questions please call Heather Gasama at the City of St. Louis Department of Health at (314) 657-1492.