

INFORMATION SHEET #2
MIT W85 – Westgate
September 6, 2006

As promised during the August 10, 2006 Westgate Town Hall meeting, this is an update on the latest round of PCB testing of caulk and soil at the Westgate complex.

1. Although regulations do not require caulk to be tested in the absence of disturbances such as renovations, the EHS Office took samples from the non-window caulk on the outside of the low rise buildings. The samples revealed elevated concentrations of PCBs, above the EPA threshold for abatement. Leaving the caulk in place without disturbing it would not pose a health risk. However, once voluntary testing is done and shows elevated levels, the caulk must be removed. This caulk will be removed and replaced using procedures formally reviewed and approved by the EPA prior to commencing abatement.
2. Samples taken from the Westgate garden soil revealed very low levels of PCBs (0.07-0.2 ppm). These are common “background” levels and do not require any remediation as they are well below concentrations accepted by EPA (1 ppm) and DEP (2 ppm) as environmentally safe for humans. As mentioned by Dr. Diamond at the August 10 meeting, PCBs are not concentrated by vegetables growing in soil, and consuming produce from the garden does not pose a health risk. There is no need for further action on these areas.
3. As discussed at the August 10th meeting, there were some soil samples in other areas of the Westgate complex that require remediation under regulations. The level of PCBs in these areas does not pose a health risk but these PCBs must be remediated to protect against any possibility of long-term leaching into environmental water and food supplies. Licensed professionals will do this work in accordance with the regulations. *We will inform you in advance* of any such activities occurring in the coming months. While the abatement is being designed and approved, MIT has covered the affected areas with a protective layer of fabric and mulch. This is not required by regulations but is being done to form a barrier against even minimal exposure.

The MIT EHS Office, Housing Office and Medical Department are available to answer questions. We will continue to update residents of Westgate as activities progress. Please send any questions that you may have to Dennis Collins [colins@mit.edu]. The best person to answer a question will respond as soon as possible during business hours.

Additional information regarding PCBs is available on the web at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts17.pdf>