

Chemical smell keeps West Slope schools closed

El Dorado County health and school officials have extended the closure of Oak Ridge High, Rolling Hills Middle, and Silva Valley Elementary school campuses as a precautionary measure until additional air sampling can be conducted on Oak Ridge High's track, at all three schools and in some classrooms. The schools were closed Sept. 18, and students evacuated following a strong chemical odor.

"We recommended the continued closure of the schools as a precaution until additional air monitoring data can be collected and analyzed to confirm that there are no potential health hazards," said county health director Olivia Kasirye, in a statement. "All testing done to date indicates that there is no actionable cause for concern for the materials that we have been able to monitor; however, we are erring on the side of caution."

Health officials believe the incident is localized to the Oak Ridge High School track and additional air sampling was expected to take place by the federal Environmental Protection Agency on Saturday. At this time, all school and non-school activities have been suspended and health officials are advising members of the public to avoid the immediate area pending sampling results.

Aside from experiencing initial symptoms, there have been no reports of medical attention sought by teachers or students due to this incident. Health officials continue to monitor the situation and will provide updates as they become available. Parents will be notified when the schools have been cleared to reopen.