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Toxicology for Safety and Health

REPORT ON THE INSPECTION AND SAMPLING – ST. BERNARD PARISH

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I inspected the ship, the Scotia Prince, docked in St Bernard Parish at the request of parish officials, and talked to many of the residents on board the ship Feb 11 and 12, and saw the preliminary data from Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker's study regarding the health of ship board workers. The Scotia Prince workers had few if any symptoms and all of the St Bernard Parish residents, who were living on the Scotia Prince, said they felt better on the ship than when they were walking in the neighborhoods in St Bernard. They were breathing filtered, safe air on board the Scotia Prince and getting showers and three meals a day.

The results of the sampling I did of six homes is attached. It shows that the homes I inspected had the highest levels of pathogenic molds I have ever seen in my 35 years of investigating sick buildings. Every sample showed pathogenic molds in the millions per square inch of wall space or millions per gram of insulation. These levels of these pathogenic molds are sufficient to make anyone sick whether they have compromised immune systems or not.

I was shocked to find out that the Habitat for Humanity volunteers that I toured with, and who were trained by FEMA, had been told that mold cannot hurt you and you do not need any protective equipment. This was totally wrong and I gave them the 800 phone number of the lab that could overnight the proper safety equipment to them c/o the Scotia Prince since none of them had mailing addresses. Highly pathogenic endotoxins from gram negative bacteria were found earlier by NIOSH scientists and personnel from the Louisiana Dept. of Health and the levels were 20 times above normal on average. The levels were not only high inside the flooded homes but also in the ambient air in the neighborhood. Gram negative bacteria all produce endotoxins, similar to mycotoxins used in germ warfare at very high levels to kill people within minutes, and include Legionella bacteria, Salmonella, E. coli from human sewage, etc.

I inspected almost every area and neighborhood in St. Bernard Parish on Friday and Saturday and took samples. I also took pictures which are available on disc or via e-mail. Most of the residents doing remediation of their homes were wearing protective equipment and dragging contaminated debris to the curbside. I inspected many homes and the stench of rotting materials was in every home and there was significant water damage and high levels of pathogenic molds and bacteria in every home since the homes had been under water for days and have been growing mold for months. There were snakes living in some of the homes and marsh grass in most of the homes and many had marsh grass on top of the roof indicating how deep the water was in those areas of St. Bernard Parish. None of the homes were safe to occupy or even be inside for any length of time without personal protective equipment including a HEPA respirator, rubber gloves, goggles and a Tyvek suit.

Most of the homes had extremely high levels of pathogenic mold and some had the highest I have ever seen in my 35 years of testing homes for toxic mold. The levels were all in the millions of spores per square inch on walls and furniture and millions of spores per gram in insulation. There was Stachybotrys mold in every sample. Stachybotrys is the most toxic of all toxic molds and can produce mycotoxins. It is sometimes called the black

mold. It is 10 times more toxic than the most pathogenic of the Penicillium or Aspergillus molds which also can produce mycotoxins. Stachybotrys is uncommon in contaminated homes and I rarely find it in even the most sick of the sick buildings. Stachybotrys produces trichothecenes and highly purified forms were developed by the U.S. Army and never used and have since, probably been destroyed.

None of the Scotia Prince residents should return to these neighborhoods without proper protective equipment, including HEPA respirators and Tyvek suits with rubber gloves, much less return to their destroyed homes and try to live in them. Most of the homes I saw in St. Bernard Parish, that are still standing, should be bulldozed and burned because they cannot be salvaged.

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