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NWCAA ends Ferndale odor investigation

FERNDALE – The [Northwest Clean Air Agency](#) has ended an investigation aimed at identifying the source of a strong odor that led to a school evacuation in Ferndale in June 2017.

After NWCAA reviewed internal information and external reports, and checked out potential sources, we were unable to pinpoint a specific source of the odor.

What's next?

- NWCAA can reopen the investigation if new information is discovered.
- NWCAA is not an emergency-response agency, but we collaborate with first responders. We are continuing to talk with local emergency response agencies about how we can better communicate with each other during real-time incidents.
- In March, the NWCAA Board approved spending \$135,250 to purchase new air monitors (many hand held) for the Specialized Emergency Response Program (SERP) in Whatcom County. SERP's current monitors are old, increasingly hard to repair, and not able to communicate with other first responders. We hope equipping SERP members with improved monitors will not only continue and enhance the good work that they do but also collect more information that NWCAA could use in investigations. We started working with SERP on this after the Ferndale odor incident.
- In late 2017, NWCAA ordered seven low-cost "citizen science" air quality sensors that measure smoke. They cost about \$250 each; our existing high-quality, high-cost monitors cost around \$10,000 or more. We deployed the sensors next to our current monitors for comparison. There is potential that these low-cost sensors will eventually enable the deployment of high-density sensor networks. Our one-year study to collect data is ongoing.
- NWCAA recently bought a portable monitoring trailer. When fully equipped, the trailer will enable NWCAA to perform air quality testing at temporary sites throughout Island, Skagit and Whatcom counties. This portable station will be used for micro-scale air quality studies and for temporary use in areas without a dedicated long-term monitor.

The Northwest Clean Air Agency is responsible for enforcing federal, state and local air quality regulations in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. In addition to permitting and regulating industrial sources of air pollution, the agency provides services and information related to asbestos, indoor air quality, outdoor burning, wood stoves, and fireplaces. More information about the agency is available at www.nwcleanairwa.gov.