

Chemical solvent the culprit behind complaints of dizziness at Wood End School

READING - Fire personnel transported students and staff members from the new Wood End School on Sunset Rock Lane yesterday afternoon after they complained of feelings of dizziness and disorientation.

According to a report from Fire Chief Greg Burns to Town Manager Peter Hechenbleikner on the incident, at approximately noon yesterday his department received a call from school staff stating that there was an odor of gas in the building.

Upon arrival, emergency personnel identified several special needs students who were complaining of dizziness and disorientation, and in all 12 patients (special needs students and teachers) were identified as suffering

from similar symptoms.

Fire personnel treated some patients and arranged for ambulances from North Reading and Wilmington to assist in transporting the victims to Winchester Hospital for evaluation. Reading Health Administrator Jane Fiore was also called to the scene, and the school department brought in an industrial hygienist to evaluate the air quality of the building.

Upon further investigation, fire department personnel determined that a contractor performing roof repairs was using a chemical solvent in the area of a HVAC air intake unit, which sent some of the solvent into the building. The air intake unit later supplied make-up air to

the cafeteria, gymnasium and special needs area of the building. Only the second floor of that wing was impacted by the event, and the building was later ventilated to remove any remain-

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FIRE DEPARTMENT rescue units from Reading, North Reading and Wilmington are ready to transport staff and students to area hospitals from the Wood End School yesterday. Here, a teacher motions to personnel that there are two more victims who need transport. See story for details. (Don Young photo)