

City coating arsenic hazards

Project launched in parks to make wooden equipment safe for use by children

by Karen Mathews, Staff Writer

The sealing of arsenic-preserved playground in Berkeley's parks was kicked off Tuesday with a news conference in Cedar Rose Park.

"Now everybody can breathe a little easier," said parks superintendent William Montgomery as workers applied a coat of Deck and Shake, an oil-based sealant produced by Kenco to swingsets.

Glenn Lynch, the city's environmental health chief, said other wooden park furniture preserved with the arsenic copper compound will all be sealed within the next week.

Montgomery estimated the cost of sealing the equipment at \$700 for materials and \$2,000 for labor.

The potential danger of arsenic from exposure to the playground equipment became an issue for the city in early May, according Lynch.

He said city officials learned of the problem after publication of an article, "America's Poisoned Playgrounds," in *Youth News*.

Other city parks which contain playground equipment preserved with the arsenic compound include Spruce Michigan, Cordonices, King and the new Strawberry Creek Park.

Bob Schlag, a state environmental health specialist, said problems had arisen in testing the arsenic levels of the equipment because "nobody ever really looked into it before."

Schwag added that he did not believe the amount of arsenic in the playground equipment was "going to cause an acute problem, but arsenic is a long-term carcinogen."

Tony Horodysky, a leader of the neighborhood group Parents United for Health, said coating the equipment was a step in the right direction, but if it were me I think they should have done it in May."