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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "LANDFILL MERCURY REMOVED" NSY PORTSMOUTH ME
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Landfill mercury removed

Shipyard disposes of contaminated vault

By Larry Favinger
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PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD — The second and final mercury vault cluster buried in the Jamaica Island Landfill has been found. Its contents were removed and sent to a licensed disposal site off shipyard property.

A total of 23 55-gallon drums filled with materials contaminated with mercury were contained in the eight poured-concrete vaults. The walls of the vaults were 15- to 20-inches thick and in good condition, as were the drums, a shipyard spokeswoman said.

These vaults were buried about 17 feet below grade. Deborah White of the shipyard's congressional and public affairs office said soil samples taken in and

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around the area did not show mercury levels above normal. The area from which the vaults were removed has already been restored.

Vaults containing mercury were buried at two sites in the Jamaica Island Landfill between 1973 and 1975. As part of the yard's clean-up program, the Navy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Maine Department of Environ-

mental Protection and the Shipyard Restoration Advisory Board have been working for several years to identify and study environmentally polluted sites at the shipyard. A major concern had been the possibility that mercury had leached from the burial sites.

The first vault was found and cleaned up in 1997. That area, which was smaller, was found between 12 and 13 feet below grade. The drums that were stored in that vault were described as being in

incredibly good condition.

The location of the second site within the 25-acre landfill located at the eastern tip of Seavey Island, was pinpointed last spring with the aid of an old aerial photograph taken about the time the vaults were buried. That photograph, plus the information previously gathered by the Navy and Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation, an environmental contractor working for the Navy, led to the discovery of the second vault.

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