

Environmental Report: Nov. 19, 2018

Submitted by: Joan Licari, Chair
Environmental Committee

Quemetco:

Important Public Meeting
**California Department of Toxic Substances
Control (DTSC)**
**Soil Testing Results for Toxic Lead
And Arsenic around Quemetco Inc.**
Tuesday, December 18, 2018
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Hacienda Heights Community Center
1234 Valencia Ave., Hacienda Heights

The most important issues currently surrounding the Quemetco lead/acid battery recycling plant located in City of Industry is the request from the company to the South Coast Air Quality District for a change in permit to increase production by 25% and the filing on Oct. 31st by State of California Attorney General, Xavier Becerra, of a suit against Quemetco on behalf of the California Dept. of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) for past and present violations.

From the DTSC website:

“SACRAMENTO – The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has filed a civil complaint against the Quemetco battery recycling facility, located in the City of Industry, for 29 alleged violations of the California Hazardous Waste Control Law.

The DTSC Director Barbara A. Lee reports that the “DTSC has attempted to resolve these issues, and although some have been addressed, serious violations remain. Facilities that process hazardous wastes must handle, store, and treat them in compliance with our laws. DTSC is ensuring they do.”

“ ...Violations identified during multiple DTSC inspections include a non-functioning leak-detection system in a containment building that holds hazardous lead waste; failure to construct an adequate groundwater monitoring system; and failure to minimize the possibility of releases of hazardous waste into the environment.”

“The California Attorney General’s Office filed the complaint on behalf of DTSC in Los Angeles County Superior Court on October 31, 2018.”

“Other violations include the improper storage of hazardous waste and failure to fix deteriorating structures. The complaint demands Quemetco pay an unspecified amount of penalties and calls on the court to order the company to comply with hazardous waste laws.”

“Quemetco holds a permit from DTSC to treat and store hazardous waste and the facility is subject to regular compliance inspections. DTSC is currently reviewing Quemetco’s permit renewal request. “

“Quemetco, Inc., recycles lead-acid batteries, which involves separating lead from other components, smelting the lead and refining it to meet customer specifications. The facility has been in operation since 1959. “

The filing can be seen at:

https://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/Projects/upload/Quemetco_Complaint-for-Civil-Penalties-and-Injunctive-Relief-w-filestamp_103118.pdf

The filing cites 29 alleged violations of regulations. The results could result in the release hazardous waste including lead and arsenic into local areas and contamination of surface and underground water resources. The groundwater is the source of drinking water for local areas. Effective January 1, 2018, California regulations authorize the Court to impose a civil penalty of up to seventy thousand dollars (\$70,000) for each violation of a separate regulation. For continuing violations, the Court can impose a penalty of up to seventy thousand dollars (\$70,000) for each day that violation continues.

In addition, HHIA, the Clean Air Coalition of North Whittier and Avocado Heights, and Sierra Club have been very concerned that DTSC has still, after 2 years, not released to the public results of soil tests conducted in 2016 in Hacienda Heights and Avocado Heights within one-quarter mile of the Quemetco facility.

As a result, the coalition of these three groups contacted the office of Speaker of the California Assembly and our local assemblyman, Ian Calderon, about our concerns that over two years have passed and still no results had been released. Residents in Hacienda Heights live within about 600 feet of the plant and are concerned about health risks associated with lead, arsenic, antimony, and cadmium emissions that are associated with facilities that recycle lead/acid batteries.

A meeting was held at the Speaker’s office in the City of Industry. Attending were representatives from HHIA (Joan Licari, Mike Williams, Lucy Pedregon), CAC, Deputies of Ian Calderon, representatives from both Los Angeles County Supervisors Janice Hahn and Hilda Solis.

Shortly after the meeting, Deputies from Calderon’s office reported that DTSC will be holding the community meeting on Dec. 18th (information above) at the Hacienda Heights Community Center. To encourage good attendance at this meeting, a committee of coalition members and including Lucy Pedregon and Joan Licari from HHIA was established to get publicity out to the local communities. Two meetings have been held to determine strategies. **We urge all concerned residents of Hacienda Heights attend the meeting on Dec. 18th!**