

Environmental Report: July 18, 2016

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Puente Hills Park Meeting:

The DEIR is out. Comments are due Aug. 8, 2016.

A community forum was held on June 29th at which the preferred park plan was presented. This plan looks pretty much like the preferred plan from before. The DEIR includes a 20 year master plan. Development will take place in several phases with the western section to develop first.

Impacts of the development are deemed to be less than significant with mitigation since 88% devoid of vegetation due to operation of the Puente Hills Landfill. Major issues that remain are how to get people into the park and circulation since there is only one access road from Crossroads. This access is shared between the public, the Sanitation District and Rose hills that will be allowed to have funeral processions through the park to the northern section of Rose Hills Cemetery.

A major concern for Hacienda Heights is the lack of an access from our community. The problem with access from our community is because the park will be located on the top of the landfill in the fill area. This area will be controlled by the L.A. County Dept. of Parks and Recreation. However the slopes are controlled by the County Sanitation District.

There is also concern that that roadway is lined with one eucalyptus tree that present a major hazard for fires. Numerous people were killed in a fast moving fire in the Oakland hills when residents were trapped by fire spread by eucalyptus with limited access for escape. The fire ultimately killed 25 people and injured 150 others.

Quemetco

A portion of the Quemetco battery recycling plant in the City of Industry was closed this week (July 15th) by DTSC due to failure to take corrective action on previously cited violations. The Los Angeles County Dept. of Public Health is closely monitoring the situation at Quemetco and working with the State and local partners to address potential health impacts. (For more information see: <https://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/Projects/Quemetco.cfm>.)

A community meeting was held on June 23rd by the South Coast Air Quality Management District at La Puente High School. The meeting was to discuss with the public an Arsenic Risk Assessment AQMD will be conducting as part of the investigations they will be conducting as part of the of the request by Quemetco for a permit to expand operations by 25%. Current operations are 7 days per week, with shut down for part of the day. The permit would allow operations for 24 hours per day.

To see the PowerPoint presentation shown at this meeting click:

http://cleanaircoalition.org/uploads/3/4/5/7/34576715/scaqmd_power_point_6_23_16.pdf

The facility has been operating since 1959 and in the past has been subject to AQMD and DTSC violations. The plant, however, is generally in compliance. The AQMD claimed that since 2015 there have been no violations. They are monitoring emissions from the stack continuously. Fence-line readings are taken daily.

The risk assessment is to be done due to new rules that mean risk now considered higher because of tighter regulation. Arsenic is considered a cancer-causing element.

Quemetco is the first plant to be affected by the new rules since it is now the only plant since only plant in western states since closure of similar Exide plant closure in Vernon, CA. The new regulations are tailored to include information gained from Exide. However, AQMD claimed at the meeting that Exide a much bigger problem.

What will be analyzed:

1. AQMD will be testing in next several months for arsenic. Arsenic is used in the refining of the lead from the batteries. Quemetco claimed their clients wanted that in processing.
2. What is the maximum risk of exposure?
3. There are four steps involved in the risk assessment process; a) hazard identification, b) exposure assessment, c) dose-response assessment, and d) risk characterization.
 - a. Arsenic can occur as gas and particulates. They will be analyzing for both.

Public comments:

The public comments were concerned about past exposures to arsenic.

Residents complained in public comment period of smells, and materials from stack at night.

The public is concerned about exposure of children and staff at schools in the area? Anecdotal reports of nosebleeds in people including children have been expressed..

Citizens asked “Why are they expanding in an area of housing when batteries are brought in from around the world to City of Industry”. They complained that the plant should not be allowed to expand and should in fact be shut down. Concern about night operations—seem to be louder at night than during the day

There was concern about the cumulative impacts of other polluting plants in Industry, including lead that is now being studied in the areas within a ¼ mile radius around the plant by the CA Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).

Attendees also complained of a need for an integrated approach with AQMD, DTSC, and Water Board because of the two permits that Quemetco is currently seeking—a 10 year extension of operation from DTSC.

Public comments also complained there seemed to be more activity at night. The AQMD reponse is if you think something is going on, call 1-800 SMOG.

Lead testing has begun and first results are coming in.

DTSC has started testing soils in the vicinity of the Quemetco facility located in Industry but on the border with Hacienda Heights. There is concern about long term pollution of soils and water in the vicinity of the plant since its beginning in 1959.

The state Department of Toxic Substances Control recently issued four additional violations in an addendum to a previous order from August 2015 claiming Quemetco has not set up a system for determining whether toxic contaminants are leaching into the San Gabriel Basin, the main source of drinking water for 1.8 million San Gabriel Valley residents.

Preliminary results of the testing have found hazardous lead levels around the edge of the plant but, so far, no high levels in the housing areas nearby according to DTSC.

The department has already tested more than 200 locations in the industrial and commercial areas in close proximity Quemetco plant. Ten 10 of those locations were deemed hazardous.

Those hazardous areas, which were not near homes, need to be cleaned and possibly paved over to prevent further build-up.

DTSC has been attempting to get residents in the nearby neighborhoods to sign agreements to let testing take place on their properties. However, only about one-third have signed on –106 homes.

DTSC has required the testing because of concerns that Quemetco released high levels of toxic metals numerous times in the past, in 1991, 2004 and 2012. Each time they were ordered to perform clean up operations. This new round of testing will determine if the battery recycler is releasing unsafe levels of lead and arsenic and if residues from past operations have contaminated the areas around the plant where residents could come in contact with the lead.

Testing is being done by consultants hired by Quemetco but supervised by DTSC. Preliminary results have shown elevated levels, but representatives from DTSC say nothing has reached a point of concern.

Of the 75 soil samples tested for lead in preliminary work, less than half exceeded 80 parts per million, the point at which more testing is required. Approximately eight of the 25 soil samples tested at a second residence surpassed that amount. Exact numbers for the first property are not available.

The high concentrations require a risk assessment before DTSC can determine how to proceed.

If any of the samples come back above 1,000 parts per million, the area is deemed hazardous and requires immediate clean-up. Reports indicate that none of the samples so far reached that limit in the residential area

DTSC could expand their sampling to as much as a mile from Quemetco, an area that encompasses as many as 5,000 homes.

- **FREE SOIL TESTING**

If you are interested in having your soil tested, please see the sampling protocol, below, and take no more than three samples to: San Angelo Park 245 S. San Angelo Ave, La Puente Saturday, 7/23/16 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m .

USC is not limiting residence distance. All are welcome. The TESTING IS FREE AND RESULTS ARE IMMEDIATE. If you have any questions please visit the CAC website, <http://www.cleanaircoalition.org>, or contact Rebecca OvermyerVelazquez cac@cleanaircoalition.org or Marilyn Kamimura 626-330-9365. CAC/vz:mmd *****

Soil Sampling Protocol*****

1. Collect the top 1-2 inches of dirt (original soil). About 1 cup or so is good.
2. If possible, remove roots, stones, and grass from the dirt. If you have a strainer, you can put the dirt in the strainer and shake it to separate the dirt from other large items (sort of like you would do with flour when you sift it).
3. Place the clean sample in a plastic zip-lock bag (plastic or glass containers also work fine). Ideally, leave the bag open and in the sun for a day or two to help the dirt completely dry.
4. You are welcome to take several samples from different places in your yard. Contaminant levels can vary even in a single yard. Put each sample in a separate bag/container with a label telling us where the sample was taken.