

# Porter Ranch Community Advisory Committee

## Meeting #12

Thursday, March 31, 2016  
Porter Ranch Community School

### **DRAFT NOTES**

**First Posted: 4/1/16 at 12:30pm**

**Last Updated:**

Paula Cracium, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

#### *Members Present:*

Paula Cracium  
Jarrod DeGonia  
Vivian Eckchian  
Craig Forray  
Tom Johnson  
John Lee  
Mary Melvin  
Matt Pakucko  
Andre Van der Valk

#### *Guest Speakers:*

Katie Butler, LA County Department of Public Health  
Angelo Bellomo, LA County Department of Public Health  
John Budroe, OEHHA  
Jorn Herner, CARB  
Steven Leonido-John, US EPA Region 9

John Bwarie introduced the panel and the panel gave brief updates:  
Angelo reported on the two phases of air monitoring that wrapped up on Monday, which included swab wipes. The second phase started Tuesday and will run for 8 days and will monitor air in homes. By the second or third week of the month they should have some good data to share.

Katie talked about the CASPER health study. They have released some preliminary results. Over 60% of the public are reporting symptoms that match symptoms reported during the leak.

Steven from the EPA reported that the EPA has a fairly limited authority. They have been working closely with County Health on sampling methodology. Indoor air quality is

a relatively new concern so there aren't a lot of experts in that field. Matt Plate will engage with the County.

John Bedroe from OEHHA has been monitoring the air quality and participating in the conference call between agencies. They are looking for any other toxicity information on the mercaptans.

Jorn Herner reported that CARB has encouraged residents to run their house air filtration systems. They continue to do air quality monitoring as well. Their methane monitors are working very well. Some of the benzene monitors were not intended to be left alone for long periods of time but they are working around that.

John Bwarie then brought up the questions that were submitted in advance from the Committee:

Q: LAPH—is there a schedule for completing the surface sampling?

A: There is the collection and then the analysis. Sampling should be done April 8<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>. All the data should be collected by the 25<sup>th</sup> of April. They will be piecing the parts together to interpret it. A report of the analysis should be available early May

Q: What chemicals will be analyzed?

A: Over 200 chemicals—volatile, which quickly dissipate, as well as semi volatile which could stick to surfaces. Metals as well as sulfur compounds are being measured. They are also looking at the dust and the character of the dust. They have particle experts with them looking at the make up of the dust. They are also collecting health information in the homes where they are collecting samples.

Q: Could you increase the surface being swabbed to increase chances of finding something?

A: They are using the standard sample area. They are looking for areas where there is a lot of dust so if there is something there, they are more likely to find it.

Q: Does Public health consider any chemicals safe for public health?

A: Scientific experts need to determine if there are significant levels that cause risk. There aren't a lot of control samples out there that consider what's in the dust. The control group will be used to analyze levels of chemicals in the samples. They will also look at other types of information that can be gathered.

Q: Related to the air purifiers, is it possible for particulates to escape the filters? What are the recommendations for filters?

A: It is appropriate to change the filters, which was also in the latest fact sheets. They are testing the filters. Not everything will escape out of the filter.

Q: What about the air scrubbers and UV Filters?

A: As long as they are in place, they will kill the particles. They don't work as well on non-bacterial particles.

Q: How do you distinguish between normal house use chemicals and gas leak chemicals?

A: The control group will be key in understanding that. There will be analyses to try to attribute chemicals to one source or another. The control group data will be essential. Those homes are in Eastern Northridge to ensure that the homes are part of the same

air system but far enough away. The ambient levels supported the use of it as the control source.

Q: What about soil and pool testing?

A: The focus is on the indoor air and surfaces right now. The types of chemicals inside would weatherize outside and dissipate. Swimming pools are not a concern because of the dilution and they have a filtration system. If the Ph changes, that might be an indicator. It is important to check the Ph on fish ponds. If they see something unusual indoors, it may suggest something outside to be checked. But, their focus right now needs to be on indoor particulates.

Q: How many more homes will be tested if a significant number have contamination?

A: There are three scenarios: 1) nothing is significant and everything is safe; 2) things are troubling and further testing is needed or; 3) they found something and it will require some sort of mitigation process. At some point, they will need to decide if every home needs to be tested. Then a protocol would be established to ensure the appropriate cleaning method is used.

Q: What would the cleanup be?

A: It would be to get levels that are back to background numbers. Mitigation would require going back to the drawing board.

Q: How can residents be notified of testing or cleaning opportunities?

A: The current phase is 100 selected homes are being tested. Other homes will be added if there is a second phase.

Q: How do you guarantee that every home is clean and made safe?

A: They rely on the experts to determine what is needed to make it safe. With many of the chemicals in this testing, the first mitigation is ventilation—one to two weeks of keeping the doors and windows open. That is the first step. Residents are encouraged to ventilate.

Q: Can the EPA do anything to encourage a national emergency declaration beyond the state declaration?

A: That request would have to come from the governor. EPA would advise the President.

Q: Are there any resources not available because there is not a national emergency declaration?

A: No.

Q: The \$800 toxicology testing: can't it be offered through the government?

A: There is no toxicology test that public health would recommend. If doctors are recommending that, they should call public health. They do not see any toxicology tests that would be useful in this instance.

Matt: Have you found or have a list from SCG about chemicals that have come out of the well?

A: We have information about what was in the air right next to the well. We have limited information of other substances including the oily residue. They have information about what was in the thick of the plume. They are working on soil data on site. They are working on getting more source data.

Matt: Is SCG offering that data or are you having trouble getting it from them?

A: We are working on getting those soil samples. They have a short list of items that would be useful. If those aren't provided, Public Health will use a legal route to obtain the data.

Andre: There are 100 homes and 60% still have a problem?

A: Of the 210 CASPER homes, 62% of those households are still experiencing symptoms they believe are related to the leak.

Andre: Are those homes in a five-mile radius?

A: Three-mile radius. Public Health felt that was sufficient because that's where a majority of symptoms originally happened.

Andre: How far is the Northridge community being used as a control group?

A: 5-6 miles. There was not a control group for the CASPER survey. That is only for the environmental study.

Paula: We still have thousands still living outside of their homes. Is there anything we can do to expedite the testing?

A: We are populating data tables as they come in. The timing versus the need to get answers, the County Supervisor's office has been instructing us to reach a milestone of data in order to make decisions. The legal team is asking to extend the relocation date in order to allow people to remain in relocation. We will make interpretations as the data comes in. Any arguments to courts that we make are dependent on the information and the significance of the data.

Paula: What is your recommendation on people returning to their homes?

A: It hasn't changed, if they go home and experience symptoms, they should stay out. If they return home, if they don't experience symptoms, remain in their homes. Public Health is collecting information and will be able to discuss more data.

Paula: You don't see any long-term risks?

A: We aren't 100% certain that there isn't anything. Moving people out is a serious question. It is a judgment call, but the minute we had information that there was a danger to living in the house, we would act immediately. Even though it looks like levels are back to normal, people are still experiencing symptoms. People should be given the opportunity to stay out of the home if they have symptoms.

Paula: That's why the recommendation is so surprising. Of the small percentage of people who have returned home, it surprising that the recommendations haven't changed.

Jarrold to Paula: What would be the alternative?

Paula: They have gotten data that has given them reason to look deeper. I would think you should recommend that people stay out of their homes so that there would be a clean bill of health for their homes before they return.

Paula: Have you received information from the UCLA study?

EPA, OEHHA, CARB stated that they had not received that study.

Paula: What were the results of the UCLA study?

Katie from Public Health: In the study, hexane and benzene were found, but we don't have a comparison. We don't have standards for those chemicals in a wipe sample so we don't know what they mean. That's why this data we are collecting now is important. It's not enough information to act beyond "let's collect more data" but we are anxious to get more data.

Paula: It would be great to have them look at the data and weigh in.

Paula: During the leak, Termo had an expulsion of natural gas coming from their site. The natural gas from an unfiltered oil well, does it have any greater risk than what came out of production from SCG?

Angelo from Public Health: That's a good question. It could have other constituents, but we don't have any data of what it looked like.

Paula: Could Jorn (from CARB) get that data?

Jorn: It was natural gas but without mercaptans. DOGGR may have answers about how that would behave.

Jarrold: AQMD is ready to file a complaint. We can ask them for information.

Paula: Dust—it is very windy out here and now we have a dirty site. Have you looked at some of the effects coming from polluted soil?

OEHHA: Some construction sites have used, in the past, oil to suppress dust. That's an engineering question.

Paula: It blows around. I have never had nosebleeds but got them in the last few weeks.

A: We'd like to get a sample of the dust that is blowing around. We will talk with the regulatory agencies.

Tom: Of the 60% experiencing symptoms, were they people who stayed in their homes during the leak or people who moved and returned?

A: Close to half of those homes had been relocated at some point. 1/3 had moved back. We did capture some people who stayed during the duration.

Tom: What about a violation that was reported on by the Daily News?

Paula: That's the Termo well we were just discussing. AQMD is looking into the fines as well. I have contacted Termo to let them know there is a huge breach of trust. One of their responses was that they were between a rock and a hard place with no place to release the gas. They are being very careful in how they communicate. Did Jorn know about it?

Jorn: It took a while to discover it. When looking at the plumes there was the main plume and then one off to the side.

Paula: Was there any way from the flights to determine how much gas was being expelled?

Jorn: The Termo release wasn't a huge gusher.

Paula: It is disturbing that DOGGR knew about it in January and didn't talk about it at all during these meetings.

Tom: Concern for the long-term impact for those who did stay during the leak, when will there be a health study report provided by AQMD? Is your information to be used in support of that study or will the AQMD study be separate?

A: Public Health talked with them and the AQMD study will have a much longer duration and they will enlist the best in the nation to create that study. It will be a very good study that will take all of the data that is generated and then use it to make some good estimates of what the long-term impacts may be.

Andre: My home has a monitor and I have noticed spikes of benzene and tylen. I also notice other things going on around like when the garbage truck is driving by, benzene levels spike. Sometimes you don't know if its diesel, gas or natural gas. Every time the trash truck comes by, it spikes. There is a hill out here and a lot of diesel trucks. When the wind is blowing, the monitor zeroes out. You have clean air and everything else. There is a lot of equipment near homes and benzene is being spewed out there. There has to be some seepage out of that ground. That has to explain why people are still experiencing symptoms.

Angelo: You are pointing out that this is complicated and we have to control for these complicating factors. These are all things that are part of a puzzle. There has been discussion about what type of monitoring needs to continue.

Craig: You basically have 100 test tubes. Are they part of CASPER?

Katie: Those homes we are testing now are also getting a health survey. By chance there could be some that were part of the CASPER study but, because of the confidential information of the study, that information isn't available. The current study does also ask about relocation and pets.

Craig: People may want to open their windows for a week or two weeks before they return home? Will any of these substances remain?

Angelo: There was some state guidance that suggested ventilating for two hours before entering. We are now focusing on not just air but also particulates.

Craig: We aren't the only gas field community. Are there others like this?

A: This event is unprecedented.

Craig: What do you see as far monitoring in the future?

Angelo: The Board of Supervisors introduced measures because of the questions about what to do moving forward. We are not of the opinion that you simply let state agencies do what they have been doing. There need to be regulations on how oil and gas is processed. There needs to be greater collaboration between agencies.

Craig: It seems that the study from UCLA and other information should go out to all of the agencies.

Katie: These agencies should have gotten the information. There isn't a lot of information to make decisions from but we should have sent it to them.

Craig: I am troubled that all of these agencies don't know what's happening with all of the information. Is there a way to coordinate?

Katie: We did verbally tell them about the study but didn't email it out.

John Lee: Is anyone doing a study about breathing in particulates? If these particulates are now in our homes. I'm worried about what we are breathing in.

Angelo: You need Dr. Jerrit to explain the testing that has been done. Once we know what's in the houses now, and what's the nature of the dust. Could it have created a greater risk in the past?

Tom: When you said "Could be", it needs to be. Residents want to know what their long-term health exposures are. For people who stayed in their homes.

A: We look at the start of any good health study needs to know what the environmental risks are and any new information we don't have yet, if we can get Dr. Jerritt's information that introduces new substances, that needs to be included in any testing going forward.

Paula: Have you done any flyovers? What do you see?

Jorn: The flights are down wind. We go as low as we can to get a curtain. There was a 95% reduction right after the well was killed. It is currently at a steady level.

Paula: Would you expect any effect on the community?

Jorn: It would depend on the other constituents in the air. We have mostly been looking at benzene. With the analysis we have done, you get an increase in benzene with the increase of methane but it is still below levels that are problematic.

Mary: Is the seepage why people are still smelling the gas?

Jorn: It could be, which is why we continue to do fly overs to see what's normal. AQMD continues to do their off site sampling.

Craig: Your flyover detected Termo?

Jorn: There are different types of flyovers. NASA has an infrared system that can show plumage but not how much is being emitted. They can see where it is coming from but not how much. It is an infrared type instrument. NASA detected the Termo leak.

Craig: Termo seems to have been doing something sneaky and the fines don't seem commiserate. It seems that we need constant monitoring to watch these people who don't self-report. Is there some future plan where monitoring is constant or will it dissipate as time goes on?

Jorn: We are looking for a new standard in this community.

Paula: Can you go back and request regular testing on some level?

Jorn: A few years ago we began looking at regulations. They are going through the system now. It will include greater monitoring going forward. There will be additional requirements.

Craig: Are there any criminal filings? A fine seems like a slap on the wrist? They don't care about fines.

Paula: SCG had a break in the well. Termo was a willful act. Can we do anything about it? Who can we contact to make that happen? Would you also put something in place to ask for payment of replacing the filters? For OEEHA, have you looked at the CASPER study?

Budroe: We've taken a look and there needs to be more data for us to do something about it.

Paula: It would be great to hear an official statement on it. And about recommendation for people moving back. We want to make sure the county has the information when they go to court to extend the relocation. Are there things we need to be aware of that we can respond to, that are happening in agencies and legislatures?

Steven from EPA: It would be something to take to your elected officials.

Paula: Have you seen the CASPER Study?

Steven: I will have to see if our office has seen it.

Jarrold: We are telling constituents that under the current court order, we are awaiting a decision on the appeal. SCG is still to reimburse until the court issues a ruling. We can't tell them when the courts will make a decision. What we are hopeful of is that the courts will give us a grace period to get the word out.

Angelo: There are three possible outcomes; 1) TRO is dissolved, 2) trial court didn't use the right test to determine if the TRO should be lifted and sends it back or, 3) they would take the filings and issue another ruling to recommend or not recommend that the TRO remain. If we get a bad ruling, there is always another round of issues to take back to the court. We aren't stopping on this.

Paula: Is the appellate court able to use new information in their decision?

Angelo: Yes, that was part of our filings.

Andre: Regarding property taxes, people may have some cash flow problems while dealing with whether they have lived there or not. Real Estate agents have told me that no one asks about the County appraisal.

Paula: it sounds like they were going to do their assessment regardless.

John Lee: When will they get back to us?

Jarrold: April or May.

Andre: With an emergency like this, they should be able to give an extension.

Jarrold: It would be fair to get a report from both. The tax collector said that there aren't any options to give extensions unless laws allow it.

Pavley's Office regarding the legislation: The amendments require the PUC to look at the minimum requirements for reliability.

Paula: All the testing that DOGGR has reported, you are trying to make that into law?

Pavley's Office: Yes. They are emergency measures right now and we want those to be put into law. There wasn't a lot of directive in the Governor's order so Sen. Pavley worked on it. The emergency orders are temporary. I don't know the exact time they will be in place so I don't want to misstate.

Tom: Does the SCG have a say on the limit allowances?

Pavley's Office: The data drives the legislation. They are not without a voice, though.

The meeting was adjourned.