

Porter Ranch Community Advisory Committee

Meeting #5

Thursday, January 28, 2016
Cal State University Northridge

DRAFT NOTES

First Posted: 1/29/16 at 11:35am

Last Updated:

John Bwarie, Executive Director, called the meeting to order at 6:06pm.

Members Present:

Jarrold Degonia
Vivian Ekchian
Craig Forney
Rana Ghadban
Tom Johnson (late arrival)
John Lee
Mary Melvin
Issam Najm
Matt Pakucko
Jane Stanton

Guest Speakers:

Dr. Barry Wallerstein, SCAQMD
Nancy Feldman, SCAQMD
Jason Low, SCAQMD
Philip Fine, SCAQMD
Cher Snyder, SCAQMD
Leslie Luke, LA County OEM
Gillian Williams, SoCalGas
Jimmy Cho, SoCalGas

Representatives from the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) presented information on the agencies findings and actions in the SoCal Gas well leak. Barry Wallerstein, Executive Officer at SCAQMD introduced the team and topics to be covered including the abatement order, air quality monitoring efforts, and field enforcement efforts.

First to speak was Nancy Feldman, an attorney with AQMD. She reviewed some of the aspects of the order of abatement and the civil complaint they filed on Tuesday (January 26). The purpose of the order of abatement is to lessen the

severity of the impacts of the leak while Southern California Gas (SCG) takes measures including sealing the well.

The order of abatement goes beyond sealing the well. It requires SCG to provide extensive information to SCAQMD regarding their inspections as well as the DOGGR inspection root cause report that is forthcoming.

She also explained what the order for abatement does not do, which will be posted on their website. The order was signed today from a 4-1 vote.

The order of abatement does not act as a variance. It doesn't excuse for SCG non-compliance, past or future. They are still liable. It does not impose civil penalties. The hearing board has no authority to impose penalties. That lies with SCAQMD. It does not prohibit anyone from taking legal action against SCG.

She attributed their ability to achieve the comprehensive order of abatement because of the robust testimony from the public. She indicated that in her 25 years with AQMD, she has never seen such a strong, informed and articulate group participating.

The data provided by SCG won't be considered trade secret. SCAQMD will do a thorough analysis even on data that is deemed privileged by SCG.

The order also has strong language that this well will be taken permanently out of operation. The order also requires SCG to provide an air notification plan to SCAQMD. In future events of leaks and other incidences, SCG will be required to notify police schools, fire, neighborhood councils, etc. in order to notify impacted people. The order requires SCG to fund a health study even after the leak is stopped. When the odor is remediated, concern remains.

SCAQMD also filed a civil penalty action complaint. It is a classic public nuisance complaint. Due to the negligence of SCG, the leak was allowed to occur and persisted as long as it has. Potential penalties are in the millions of dollars. She couldn't go into too much detail about the evidence to be used in lawsuits. Multiple lawsuits are already being filed. There is a chance that the SCAQMD complaint will be consolidated with others.

Matt Pakucko asked if SCG's response to the order was akin to contesting a speeding ticket. Rather than paying the penalty, they could go to court to contest it?

Nancy indicated that SCG has 30 days to respond to the lawsuit filed in court. There are a variety of defenses they may raise and will remain to be seen. That information will be available on the SCAQMD website.

Barry interjected that SCAQMD is going for the maximum that they can. Supervisor Antonovich, a SCAQMD board member, has requested that penalties paid flow back to the communities that are impacted. They also recommend that state mitigation dollars collected also come back to the community.

Craig Forney asked about the opinion of the dissenting board member.

Nancy said the dissenting board member felt that there are several provisions that could have been strengthened. The record is available and her dissent will be available on the website.

Craig asked if the penalties varied, and Nancy indicated that there are a host of penalties that may be applied.

Craig asked if SCAQMD addressed how SCG will conduct themselves with other wells that are in existence. Nancy indicated that DOGGR has primary jurisdiction of the wells themselves. SCAQMD are in regular communication with DOGGR and other agencies. They suspect other agencies will take some action against the gas company. They will also file and craft remedies.

Barry indicated that they have regulations that apply to oil wells in relation to air quality and public notification. Late last year, they amended those regulations. They are planning to go back to their governing board to strengthen regulations regarding natural gas injection wells.

Craig asked what these regulations would include. Barry indicated that regulations would include that there aren't leaks from the wells, that there aren't instances of public nuisance, that the public is further notified. We would work closely with DOGGR.

Issam Najm asked how far does SCAQMD go as far as the well facilities themselves?

Barry indicated that they permit equipment related to potential air emissions. There is a limited amount of equipment at that well. The concerns of the community would be permitted by DOGGR.

Matt asked for clarification on the provision that requires draining the well to the capacity requested by the CPUC. Isn't that a conflict?

Nancy answered that there are two ways with the order of abatement. The order acknowledges that the CPUC has the authority to order SCG to accept injections of gas. SCAQMD chose to acknowledge that SCG shall not inject. The dissenting member wanted to remove the exception. They made that choice because the CPUC does have that authority. But as long as that well is leaking, the CPUC will not order further injection.

Issam asked who oversees the order of injection by the CPUC.

Barry answered that the question should be directed to CPUC. SCAQMD expertise is not in the natural gas system. If there were a question about having gas to power plants, those questions are best answered by the CPUC. Their concern is to get the leak stopped. They did what we thought they could do within the order and didn't want it dragging on. There are measures in there to protect the community that they wanted to move forward with.

Craig asked if the idea is to keep a certain level in the well for future usage.

Barry responded that this is not SCAQMD's area of expertise so we don't want to speculate. It's a question better posed to other agencies. The important thing is that the draw down on the working portion has significantly reduced the pressure. The pictures that will be shared show a difference in the release from months earlier.

Craig followed up asking if SCG is drawing down the capacity as quickly as possible. Will they maintain the well or aggressively draw down?

Barry indicated that is being determined by SCG and CPUC.

Jarrod DeGonia asked what the vision is for the long-term health study. Who will conduct it?

Barry explained that it will be carried out by independent consultant mutually select with SCAQMD and SCG. Once selected, it is managed by SCAQMD. They see it as an epidemiological study and are looking at a panel of experts who could conduct. With LA County Public Health, they included scientific expert participants. They haven't scoped out the study because the contractor will scope out the study.

Jarrod asked that they include the County's Office of Emergency Management in their notification requirements.

Jason Low then gave an overview of air quality measurements via a PowerPoint presentation. His team's purpose is to provide scientific data to assess air quality through short-term and long-term assessments to allow stakeholders to make decisions.

*[NOTE: To view the slide presentation, see the video at 27:27:
<https://vimeo.com/153468973>]*

Related to Jason's presentation, Craig asked about winds and weather impacting readings and levels. Jason indicated that the drainage flows at night and wind-

speed impact the location and concentration of methane are taken into consideration when assessing the data.

Issam asked about the SCG samples showing different data. Jason indicated that they are distinguishing between short-term samples and 24-hour samples. The data on the slides are from long-term samples.

Barry interjected that this gives perspective in contrast of some of the other areas SCAQMD has sampled such as Burbank and other areas particularly where vehicles drive.

Issam followed up with further questions regarding comparisons to long- and short-term exposure.

Philip Fine from SCAQMD explained that they take short-term samples where they suspect a problem to occur. They also take long-term samples because those are related to chronic health impacts. They assume long-term exposure of six months and have accounted for that in their estimates.

Jason explained that they take a lot of these grab samples when they suspect a concentration.

Craig asked about the averages noted on the maps, indicating that it seemed like the average exposure is better in Porter Ranch than if you lived in Burbank. Jason indicated that is was better off when it comes to benzene, but not other elements.

Issam asked a follow-up on the triggered sample reports: Why is there a large difference between the non-methane organic content?

Jason explained that the lab can identify a lot of compounds. There are still signals in the sample that they can't identify.

Issam asked how there is so much that is unknown.

Jason answered that there are a lot of compounds in the air that aren't analyzed by this method. There are literally thousands of chemical components in the ambient air.

Issam indicated that it is not comforting that we only identify 10% and the rest we don't know what it is.

Phil interjected that the test is designed to pick out the most toxic chemicals. In any ambient sample, there are compounds that are not toxic, and the test doesn't pick out non-toxics.

Matt asked if they are testing for radon.

Jason indicated that LAUSD conducted a study for radon and levels were well below concerns for health standards.

Barry added that SCAQMD doesn't typically measure radon. EPA tests for that.

Issam asked if there a concern for sulfur dioxide? The gas company has it in their data. Jason indicated that the level in the data is below the level of detection. Phil added that they will take another look at the SCG numbers.

Then, Cher Snyder from SCAQMD reported on complaints received. Their staff has been in the area responding to complaints. They have logged 3209 complaints. They normally receive 8k-10k a year so this high number in a short amount of time is notable.

Sometimes, their inspectors aren't able to get to the complaints as quickly so they appreciate your patience. They have taken enforcement action by issuing orders for SCG to comply. November 23rd they issued a notice of violation for a public nuisance. They are continuing to gather information from people impacted by the odors.

Matt asked for clarification on what is counted as a complaint. Cher indicated that each call or website complaint is counted regardless of the nuisance being verified.

Cher explained that verification of complaints go toward establishing a public nuisance. In order to verify the complaint, the inspector has to experience the odor with the complainant. Once it is verified, this provides evidence to move forward with their public nuisance case.

Barry added that there is no question that this is a public nuisance based on the number of complaints and displacement of residents.

Jarrold indicated that complaints are coming from as far as Thousand Oaks, Canyon Country, Monrovia. Is there a communication process for those that are far enough away from the source that they call the gas company to report an unrelated issue?

Barry explained that SCAQMD representatives are driving the vehicle farther and farther away and found that one stretch five miles away that was higher than the impacted area. Any time we find something of concern we inform SCG so action can be taken.

Barry offered to come back to share results of the legal efforts.

Next, John Lee announced an upcoming “Know Your Legal Rights Townhall” coming up and asked that members share information with their stakeholders. He also reported that, due to increased LAPD resources provided by SCG, they have not had a single crime in the area.

Jarrold introduced Leslie Luke from LA County Office of Emergency Management who was present explain some resources available to businesses in the impacted area.

Leslie explained that he is trying to capture any damages/losses businesses have experienced directly or indirectly from the leak. They are asking them to complete an economic impact report. They need five businesses to report to show a loss from this time last year. Then, they will work with the SBA and the state to validate the reports and then apply to a small business declaration and make loans available for small businesses. Once the SBA comes to town, it is open to any business in the county that can show damages from this incident. They are working with the Valley Economic Center and Chamber to reach out to business community. Businesses can complete the [Economic Injury Worksheet](#), print it, then email to oem@ceooem.lacounty.gov.

Jarrold asked if home based businesses qualify. Leslie indicated that they do.

Rana added that the Chamber will be working with Leslie tomorrow. As a Chamber, they are hosting a workshop to provide assistance providing legal and insurance advice. It will have a panel of experts to answer questions.

Matt asked if SCG is the only source of relocation information. Leslie indicated that SCG shares information with his agency. The County is in unified command working out of one location to make sure the county validates information coming from SCG.

Leslie indicated that the Department of Consumer Affairs is looking into price gouging and soliciting complaints of it.

Issam asked if those applying for home loans in the area being told that home loans are not being considered until the emergency is lifted. Leslie will look into that.

Matt asked: who says when it is safe to go back? He had heard that they will be given 48 hours to relocate. Leslie indicated that the LA County Public Health is involved in determining safety. It will be a joint decision validated by the County and the Public Health Officer.

Next, Gillian from SCG gave an update on relocation. While they continue to offer options, they now have 4500 relocated. They have a little over 1100 who have offers but are still making their decision and 2100 in process.

They don't have information from people who haven't notified SCG or asked for reimbursement. They continue to offer air filtration and prioritizing schools. They have brought in a number of schools including 210 plug-in air purifiers to Granada Hills Charter High.

Issam asked about reports that because the leak is close to being stopped, SCG is no longer offering relocation to homes, only to hotels?

Gillian answered that they expect the relief well by end of February and have asked their relocation companies to focus on hotels because the lease term would be very short. Concerns were raised about availability for short-term rentals.

Rana asked for a time frame on the relocation? She has heard people three weeks ago who have gotten notified and still not been relocated.

Gillian indicated that any immediate relocation is a hotel because that is what is available. Everyone who is contacting them is being contacted in 72 hours. They place 200-500 households each day. She does not have any data indicating that they are losing people in the system.

Jarrold indicated that the elected offices have contacts with the contractors and can put them in touch. Gillian asked that Rana's specific cases be referred directly to her.

Rana reported that people are being told to put hotel rooms on their own credit cards.

Gillian indicated that every claim received is in the process, if the information is complete. If they don't have all the information, they are following up to get the information. Self-placement is always an option, but hotels booked through booking sites such as Expedia.com are not bookings with the hotel. SCG can't take over reservation booked on a 3rd party site. If booked through hotel, SCG *can* take over the reservation. Otherwise, people can pay and apply for reimbursement.

Issam asked how the reimbursement process works. Gillian explained that per diem for meals are processed automatically based on the number of people in the household relocated.

Issam asked about the status of the length of stays being authorized. Where do things stand in terms of the extent of the stay?

Gillia indicated that they have authorized their relocation companies to approve through February and some into March regardless of where they are booked. When leak is filled, hotel stays will end. If individuals have specific questions about their stay, the fastest way is to contact their housing company. If they aren't getting a response they can contact Gillian.

According to the plan that was adopted by court order, relocation ends when the leak is stopped and is certified by DOGGR. For 48 hours afterward, SCG is required by the plan to pay for the temporary housing.

SCG will be notifying residents starting next week to let them know what to expect. Some residents have had their residences booked through their attorneys. Their attorneys will need to notify the residents. SCG will be providing broad communications and give progress updates.

Matt expressed concern that peoples lives have been turned into turmoil and that having 48 hours to relocate back will be a further challenge for residents.

Gillian indicated that they will look at each case if exceptions are needed.

Matt asked if residents accepting reimbursements through the website need to be aware of any waivers or fine print. Gillian indicated that they are not requiring waivers.

Issam asked about the timeframe and how it will be determined that the leak has been stopped and how this information will be disseminated.

SCG representative indicated that the jurisdictional agencies will determine that the leak has been stopped. Once it is stopped there will be no reason to hold back news.

SCG will return with specific information regarding the timeframe of notification.

Gillian added that they understand that it may be difficult to move in 48 hours. They will honor leases that they have committed to.

Rana asked for the phone number to claim inquiries. What is the claim number to get status of claim? She is hearing that it is only an email with automatic response and don't hear back.

The number is 818-435-7707. Gillian indicated that they expect a lot of checks to come out this week.

In regard to leases, some were month to month. Some leases went to April in order to negotiate availability. The vast majority will expire in April. Many were 2-3 month leases.

Craig asked if people can stay in the place even after the leak is stopped if the lease is still good. Gillian indicated that SCG will simply pay for the cost of the lease but not mileage or utilities or other costs of living in the location.

Vivian asked for a special conversation about the school.

Gillian indicated that the relocation timeframe only pertains to residents. The school relocation was determined by LAUSD and will be relocated as determined by LAUSD. SCG is happy to discuss school relocation preferences.

Then, Jimmy reported on efforts to stop the leak. Their primary focus is relief well number 1. The target date is the end of February if not sooner. They don't have a precise date and time, but they have made progress. They can't speed it up; It's like landing a plane: the closer to approach, precision matters. They are putting a tool into the well that uses magnetic field to ping to let us know where it is. It takes quite a bit of time. We were doing 200 feet at a time and now we are doing 10s.

John asked if there is there some other technique that people should be aware of at the final stage of the drilling through the cap rock. Will residents see different trucks coming through the neighborhood?

Jimmy indicated that they had quite a bit of base material going up to the canyon and had a number of trucks making trips over time. They have been asked if we are painting Hills. It is hydro seeding in preparation for El Nino. There won't be extra equipment going up.

They have county fire and health on site focusing on mission at hand. Residents will see county and fire vehicles from time to time. They are on standby.

Tom Johnson asked how close they are to point of contact on well 1.

Jimmy indicated that they are actually about 5' adjacent to the target well. 200' from the mill point. Relief well 2 is being assembled. The SPUD date, drill date, is February 8th. It is being prepared as an extreme abundance of caution.

Craig asked if they are drawing down the reservoir? Will SCG continue to do that even if they drop below the floor?

Jimmy explained that a number of agencies have jurisdiction. They have the most recent order and have not been on withdrawal since ordered by CPUC.

Craig asked for clarification as to why drawing down would be different than gas escaping through the leak.

Jimmy answered that the Air Resources Board has been doing monitoring since November. They are 60% lower than the emission rates then.

Craig asked about the age of the wells and how often they are used.

Jimmy indicated that that information has been requested of DOGGR.

Matt noted that DOGGR should already have the information, and Jimmy indicated that it is public information on the website.

Issam expressed that it is insulting that CPUC would keep the leak going to maintain operations.

Matt expressed that they have been sacrificed in the name of reliability.

Craig asked about re-injection after the leak is plugged, if it were to be drawn down until the leak is plugged.

Jimmy compared it to a balloon: it takes longer to inflate than deflate balloon. As the pressure drops down, so does the ability to flow that gas. And, if the well drops to zero, the field would not be able to keep up with demand.

Craig stated that CPUC has chosen to not stop the leak in order to maintain reliability. Someone decided to keep SCG operating even though it is going to keep leaking out. It seems that the governor should be able to override these orders.

Matt asked if the other wells on the site were included in the abatement order.

Jimmy answered that in December SCQMD did an inspection and did see 15 small leaks in surface piping. They addressed them and those leaks were resolved upon re-inspection by SCAQMD.

Issam asked about the routine nature of well "kills" and asked why that hasn't been possible here.

Jimmy explained that is something he wants to know as well. There will be a full investigation done independently. They need to let that process come out with the facts.

Jimmy also explained that they have two wells being inspected right now and part of that is killing the well. The leaking well is a truly unique instance. A kill is a way to control the pressure in order to inspect.

Issam asked if they operate any other wells through the production casing?

Jimmy indicated yes but that he isn't a well expert. It is a practice that is allowed.

John moved on to ask for questions to be answered at the next meeting.

SCG will provide people with a more firm number on the length of time between the leak being stopped and required relocation.

Rana expressed concern that some people were asked to move out of the hotels because the hotels were oversold. Gillian noted that hotels that don't have space are not able to accommodate.

Matt asked about the number of people as opposed to households. Gillian indicated that the average number of people per household is 3.

Issam expressed that people need to know how long their hotel reservation is at a hotel when they move in. and Rana expressed concern that people weren't given options or answers by the relocation companies.

Gillian suggested that they contact SCG to be assigned a community liaison who can help them.

Craig asked about contamination after the leak has stopped. People are worried that their house is tainted. Will SCG pay to clean out their ducts and carpets? Will air scrubbers continue to be provided?

Gillian indicated scrubbers will be provided to the extent that they are available. Windows can be opened and clear it out the air once the leak has stopped. She will follow up with specific details on availability.

Issam indicated that the County Health Officer said contaminants will stick to the carpets. Will there be reimbursement to clean the carpet and ducts?

Gillian clarified that she thought the sticking was in reference to sticky oily dots, and SCG will reimburse for the cleanup of that.

Further follow-up is needed to clarify the potential residue of mercaptans.

Next meeting we have someone from the Governors office to discuss the state response.

John will reach out to: the EPA regarding speaking about radon, the Insurance Commissioner regarding canceled policies, Assessor's Office and Treasurer Tax

Collector regarding home tax assessments, State legislative representatives and other agencies to clarify certification of the leak being stopped.

Jarrod announced that State Senator Pavley's moratorium (SB3830) on gas injection passed senate and will heard by assembly next week.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:34PM