

## Meeting #15

Thursday, May 12, 2016  
Porter Ranch Community School

### **DRAFT NOTES**

**First Posted: 5/13/2016 at 11:30am**

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

#### *Members present:*

Paula Cracium  
Craig Forry  
Margaret Kim  
John Lee  
Issam Najm  
Matt Pakucko  
Jane Stanton  
Andre Van der Valk

#### *Guest Speakers:*

Dr. Jeffrey Gunsenhouser (LACDPH)  
Dr. Cyrus Rangan (LACDPH)  
Angelo Belomo (LACDPH)  
Scot Cuno (LACDPH)  
Katie Butler (LACDPH)

John Bwarie opened the panel and gave brief updates.

Jeffrey (LACDPH) Gave a report on the findings of the LA County Department of Public Health's CASPER and indoor environment studies. He provided a summary of some of the activities of the department, their findings, and recommendations.

The well was capped 12 weeks ago and levels of methane and other gasses diminished significantly. Symptoms, however, did not. Department staff have been busy trying to understand why symptoms have persisted and how to eliminate risk to public health.

The CASPER study was to better understand the health symptoms. The indoor environmental study was to understand the chemicals and substances that may be lingering in impacted homes. The methods used in the study were well established in evaluating health effects of environmental factors. During CASPER study, they selected a sample of residents going

door-to-door conducting a survey on health effects. Over 60% of households had at least one member still experiencing symptoms. Before the well was capped, 80% of household members experienced symptoms. This meant they needed to find what could be causing symptoms.

The indoor assessment included sampling the air and dust. 111 homes were studied. In order to compare they selected 11 other homes a distance away from the site as a comparison. They also looked at the two schools in the community.

For the indoor air sampling, they tested for everything that could possibly express itself; 250 different chemicals. Of all those chemicals, none were at levels of concern in the sample homes or comparison homes. The dust samples were also negative. The only thing they found was the presence of some metal contaminants.

For the indoor dust sampling 16 different chemicals in dust, there were more metals at higher levels in the Porter Ranch homes than in the comparison homes. The levels were still very low and not at levels that should cause symptoms but the metals shouldn't be there.

Metals at certain levels can cause symptoms like those during the leak. While levels are low, there was a match in symptoms and metals. They sampled mud from close to the well and found metals in that mud. Barium was found in 23% of homes in Porter Ranch. This suggests that the metals may have originated from the well site.

In the indoor air samples, they found no contaminants. In the dust samples, they found metals that shouldn't be there and they could cause symptoms.

The recommendations are that Porter Ranch community members clean their homes. LACDPH will provide a protocol, which will involve cleaning soft and hard surfaces. They believe that the cleaning will reduce the dust that causes symptoms and they will continue to monitor the community.

Q: You did your own analysis, was there verification from someone else?

A: The company we contracted with is very well established. We feel it is very reliable. We didn't hire a second firm. In the formulation of the work plan, we involved other experts and we got a lot of review of the data. It wasn't just the four of us developing this. It included outside agencies.

Q: The levels are low but what about the extreme length of time?

A: The levels do apply to long term. If they were present in the dust, the answer is no.

Q: Was there a geographic pattern to the findings?

A: There wasn't a geographic pattern. There are a number of reasons that chemicals might not penetrate a home including the structure of the home. That doesn't mean there isn't a geographic pattern but this is a rapid sampling so that might not be evident.

Q: What surfaces did you sample, are the levels determined per square foot?

A: We looked for hard surfaces, counter tops, refrigerator tops that were dusty. We were able to find dust in areas that are more dusty. The way the results are reported, they are in micrograms, per centimeter squared. It makes it challenging to determine the amount of exposure over time. We can also make assumptions on ingestion of soil in an outdoor environment. We can look at conservative levels and they are still well below those levels. There are levels to compare to but they are in certain circumstances. When you think of the manner in which may be exposed, such as a child playing in dust. When we talk about contact exposure, it is more about the manner in which they were exposed.

Q: You aren't basing it on inhalation levels, you are going on present levels.

A: There are a lot of guidelines for air quality and are easier to interpret. So, the air levels in these homes are at levels one would find in any home that has not been impacted.

Q: How much dust gets put back into the air?

A: There are so many variables that play into that—how often doors are opened and closed—so it depends on variables of each individual home.

G: Anything other than Barium?

A: UCLA did a Cluster Analysis that revealed six metals: vanadium, manganese, lead, strontium, and aluminum. They were all at very low levels. Barium would be present and then two or three of the other metals would also be present. That brings up another area of concern. When these metals are clustered together, there isn't a lot of data regarding health impacts when these combinations are present.

Q: The occurrences of windy days are correlated to the blowout of the well. People want to know if it is safe to move back in.

A: The levels are very low. We think there may be some explanation to the reoccurrence of health symptoms. We don't think that these metals will cause long-term health effects. Still, there are metals that shouldn't be there and could cause symptoms so people should clean it up. I don't think the presence of those metals should be a barrier.

Q: How long have you known the results of this study? Who was it submitted to first?

A: We work hard to represent the health issues in the community. We don't feel we are limited in communicating to you. The analysis has been extraordinary. We wouldn't want to release information too quickly before knowing it is accurate. There have not been any barriers to releasing the information other than ensuring that it is accurate.

Q: This was a snapshot of tests. Do you know if the dust is from over 10 years or more recent?

A: There is no way to tell when it was deposited. The mud tested and the homes would suggest that it could be exposure from the well. We didn't test it a year ago to know if it is new.

Q: Is the dust a result of the gas leak?

A: It could be. We are looking for an explanation for people being ill. The symptoms are similar to those that barium would cause. It's not conclusive or a perfect study but it does suggest that it is possible.

Q: Was barium tested during the leak?

A: Yes, we asked that metals be tested during the leak. We looked at five different metals including barium. We found barium downwind and less concentrated upwind.

Q: The governor sent a team of experts. Can we get them to look at these results?

A: OEEHA's independent review panel was not part of our panel. We did have some from OEEHA and other agencies. We also had independent experts such as researchers from UCLA and UC Berkley and private experts.

Q: Are the experts listed in the report?

A: Yes

Q: Did you feel like you were rushed?

A: No. Every test that was done was reviewed in our analysis. This was a large set of data that other entities will probably do other analysis and items will come up for discussion.

Q: What about your finding from samples in the schools?

A: Nothing in particular stood out.

Q: Are there particular solvents or materials you recommend in the cleaning protocol?

A: There are no solvents per se. Recommendations will be included in the report. Professionals should be involved as it is very detailed, comprehensive cleaning.

Q: There is a plausible connection to the blowout and the metals. Should SCG pay?

A: Our legal team is looking at that.

Q: You say it needs to be cleaned but that it's safe. Isn't that a contradiction?

A: most experts would say this won't cause a health effect but we know that people are experiencing symptoms so we are trying to be cautious and find a cause for the symptoms. Some people may want to do some preliminary cleaning.

Q: No one has been able to get data on what came out of the well. Have you gotten any data to link what came out of the well and what is in the houses?

A: The data we have from what came out of the well is somewhat limited. We are asking the SCG for information. They are saying some things are proprietary.

Q: Is there a plan to follow up with houses in a few months to see if it is cleaned up or that it is continuing to be deposited?

A: Yes. The Air quality authorities use deep cleanings when their analysis doesn't quite find an answer to reduce symptoms.

Q: What if the dust is still coming from a source?

A: We are working with our expert panel to see if outdoor testing needs to be conducted. The concentrations were low and we believe that they would become indistinguishable in soils and other outdoor surfaces. Most of these metals have ambient levels in the soil.

Q: Could the grading from a developer be causing this metal to settle?

A: We feel like we see a pattern that can be linked to the well. It would be difficult to imagine something environmentally significant happening at the same time as the leak. Otherwise, other communities with grading activity would be experiencing the same problems.

Q: That would suggest that SCG clean every home, not just those who relocate.

A: Yes. We believe that groups in geographic areas be cleaned.

Q: What about the five-mile designation? This would include parts of Chatsworth, Northridge, and Granada Hills. That was one of the reasons I felt it was important to include Chatsworth.

A: We would certainly want anyone relocated or experiencing symptoms have their houses cleaned. The map was based on where symptoms were included.

Q: A lot of us have been focusing on the organic contamination. Now that we are looking at metals, and there are a lot of water bodies with systems that don't remove metals. Is there consideration for pools and other things kids get into?

A: We have to communicate clearly what the risk is. These levels are very low—just a few micrograms. Even at present, they don't pose a risk if they get into a swimming pool. We don't want people to perceive that these levels pose a risk. We want some of the other agencies who will help us with outdoor sampling to look at it.

Q: What level is okay or not is not clear? We don't know what the levels that kids are being exposed to are. We would like some spot sampling of those places.

A: We will talk with regulators on that.

Q: Will you post a link to the raw data to allow people to do their own analysis? I think it would help alleviate a lot of comments about reaching conclusions. Let them do their own analysis of the data.

A: Tomorrow we are releasing reports which include PDFs of summary tables—each house by column—and the chemicals. Then we have another summary table to show which chemicals were detected most frequently. We can look at sharing an Excel document. We wouldn't be prepared to share that tomorrow.

Q: Is there a way to understand the correlation between the CASPER study and the air quality and chemical levels you found?

A: We are looking at that. With CASPER, we are taking a representative sample of homes. When we did the sampling for the indoor assessment, we took the homes closest to the incident. Comparing the two becomes difficult.

Q: If you find a likelihood of symptoms in an area where you didn't find metals, wouldn't that suggest something else?

A: The metals could be present in all of the homes but the study shows that it is present in the homes we tested. Sometimes we want the right answers, we may not get the direct answer. If we get the cleaning implemented, then we can see if symptoms subside.

Q: Is there the intent to continue health screening?

A: Yes, we want to continue monitoring health; similar to CASPAR but in a different format. We want to see if people's symptoms go away after cleaning.

Q: You will be releasing a report tomorrow, when people have questions, will someone be available to answer? What is the process for people to get more information?

A: We want to work together to address that. There will be a need to work with the greater community. We generally get a lot of requests and the way to address that is through larger meetings.

Q: When you tested the air, are these metals still in the air?

A: We don't have air data since the leak was stopped. We did do some soil samples. This is why we are now talking with our partner agencies to see what needs to be monitored.

Q: Can you address barium and what type of barium this is?

A: we are not talking about radioactive barium. This barium is a salt. This is common from many sources. The toxicity of this type of situation is manifested through respiratory and skin irritants.

Q: Whom at the county are you talking to about SCG covering costs of cleaning?

A: County Council is involved.

Q: there are 6000 homes that were relocated. If every home needs to be cleaned, that could be a problem. It would take time to get through all of them.

A: Angela from Supervisor Antonovich's Office answered that those calculations are being made as to the number of cleaning teams available and the length of time to complete cleanings in all homes.

Q: What is the status of the property tax situation?

A: John read the following statement from the assessor's office:

*The Assessor's Office is proactively performing a decline-in-value review of properties in the affected areas. If a reduction is granted for 2016, it is only good for one year; it is a temporary*

*reduction. There is no backlog for the Assessor's Office in performing the (proactive) decline-in-value review.*

*Property owners may file a Decline-in Value Review Application, form RP-87, with the Assessor between July 2, 2016 and November 30, 2016. The form will be available online between July 2 and November 30. The claim form may also be requested via email at [helpdesk@assessor.lacounty.gov](mailto:helpdesk@assessor.lacounty.gov) or by calling (213) 974-3211. It may also be requested in person at our offices. The district office in your area is located at:*

*North District Office  
13800 Balboa Blvd.  
Sylmar, CA 91342  
[\(818\) 833-6000](tel:8188336000)*

*Property owners may also file an Assessment Appeal Application (Form AAB100), for a decline-in-value with the Assessment Appeals Board. The Assessment Appeals Board is an independent agency, separate from the Assessor's Office. This is a formal process.*

*The Assessment Appeals Board was established to decide on property assessment disputes between the property owner and the Assessor. Filing a formal appeal protects the property owner's appeals rights.*

*The open filing period is July 2, 2016 to November 30, 2016. There is a scheduling backlog of cases at the Assessment Appeals Board. Any decline-in-value reduction granted by the appeals board is only good for one year (the year filed.) They can be reached at (213) 974-1471 if you need additional information.*

*Essentially, property owners may have their assessment reviewed three times: (1) Proactive review by Assessor's Office, (2) File a Decline-in-Value Review Application, with the Assessor's Office and (3) File an Assessment Appeal Application (Form AAB100), with the Assessment Appeals Board.*

*We contacted the Treasurer and Tax Collector's Office (TTC) regarding the request for information on, "...when the numbers are available for the default of tax payments for the current year..." We were informed that the 2015-16 defaulted tax roll would be available late July. The TTC's tax database system does not have the capability of running a tax status report by zip code. However, the public can access TTC's website to look up individual parcels to determine tax status. The TTC indicates there is a cost associated with developing a special report and they can provide the cost information for developing such a report. If the request is for the TTC's staff to research a list of parcels, the research will be completed in conjunction with other requests and may require a cost for staff time.*

There were discussions regarding committee membership, internal communication, and the date and topic of the next meeting. Committee members expressed an interest in hearing from DOGGR and SCG at the next meeting. Further information about the cleaning protocol and the cost of covering the service is of interest.

Meeting adjourned at 7:36pm