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March 2, 2017

Board Members
South Coast Air Quality Management District Hearing Board
21865 Copley Drive
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

Subject: Proposed Action to Terminate Order for Abatement (Case No. 137-76) Requiring Health Study of Residents Affected by Aliso Canyon Gas Disaster

Dear Board Members:

We appreciate your action earlier this week to schedule today's hearing on the proposed termination of the subject Order for Abatement, which in part requires the completion of a health study within the community affected by the Aliso Canyon natural gas release. County Supervisor Kathryn Barger asked that we attend today's hearing and provide your Board with our statement. We believe that with some additional information, your Board might find that the February 7, 2017 settlement between Southern California Gas (SoCalGas) and South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) does not satisfy the health study requirement in the Order for Abatement.

It was our expectation that the Order for Abatement would result in a health study design consistent with recommendations from the expert panel convened by AQMD. The panel included health experts from County Public Health, State OEHHA, CDPH, CARB, USEPA, AQMD, and academic researchers from USC and UC Irvine. However, the health study scope of work provided in the Settlement Agreement is completely irreconcilable with the scope of work agreed upon in December 2016 by the panel of health experts. It is also troubling that the settlement document indicates SoCalGas is absolving itself of further responsibility to fund a health study.

Board Members

March 2, 2017

Page 2

County Public Health began discussions with AQMD staff regarding an implementation plan for the health study on March 16, 2016. At that time, and right through the end of 2016, our agencies had a mutual understanding of two essential requirements for a successful health study: (1) an independent scientific advisory committee to recommend a research strategy; and (2) community participation throughout the health study process.

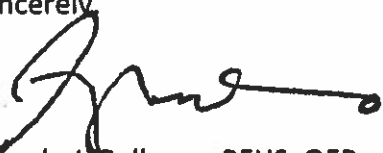
Subsequently, AQMD convened the panel of health experts to define a scope of work for the health study. The panel met on October 26, 2016, and agreed upon critical components of a prospective health study, including, but not limited to, estimation long-term toxicological risks; the need to address existing data gaps, particularly with respect to sulfur odorants; long-term health and environmental monitoring; and evaluation of broader impacts of the gas release on quality of life and well-being. The \$1 million allocation and scope of work included in the settlement does not effectively address these components, and would not contribute useful information to a prospective health study.

The magnitude of this disaster is often described as the largest natural gas release in US history, and a major setback in our State-wide efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But that characterization really misses the impact of this disaster on the health and well-being of the people living in the surrounding communities.

We urge the Hearing Board to act against the proposed termination of the Order for Abatement. The Order should remain open until SoCalGas provides for a health study that accomplishes the goals sought by the Order and further outlined by the panel of health experts. Short of this, the health concerns and needs of residents affected by this disaster will remain unmet, and they will be unable to achieve the closure necessary to move on with their lives.

We are available to provide additional information to assist your decision on this most important matter.

Sincerely,



Angelo J. Bellomo, REHS, QEP
Deputy Director for Health Protection

AJB/lk

Cc: Barbara Ferrer
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