

Toxic Gas Threshold Believed Dangerously High in Playa Vista Report

PLAYA DEL REY, Calif.—(BUSINESS WIRE)—June 11, 2001—Amid challenges to the veracity of the city's recent Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) Report on Health and Safety issues at the Playa Vista development, members of the medical and research community are urging the Los Angeles City Council to reconsider their active support for this development.

In testimony to Council Members Bernson and Hernandez at a meeting of the Public Land Use Management Committee on June 4, Professor John Montgomerie, M.D., Professor Emeritus of Medicine, USC School of Medicine, stated that the level of 10 parts per million (ppm) for Hydrogen Sulfide (H₂S) referenced in the CLA Report as acceptable was 100 times higher than research studies indicate are safe.

"In recent years there have been an increasing number of studies showing that what was once considered a safe level of H₂S is in fact very toxic to humans," Montgomerie said.

H₂S is one of the most corrosive gases known to man and has been shown to cause brain damage in small children and sensitive adults at extremely low levels.

Montgomerie stated that the California Ambient Air Quality Standard (CAAQS) for H₂S is 0.03 ppb (or 30 parts per billion), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has developed a reference concentration of less than 1 part per billion.

"Dr. Kaye Kilburn, USC School of Medicine, has performed neurological tests that indicate damage at H₂S levels as low as one part per million," Montgomerie continued. "And in a recently published study by Dr. Marvin Legator, Division of Toxicology, University of Texas, it was found that Hydrogen Sulfide at levels as low as 10 parts per billion may produce a range of disorders to the central nervous system."

Ten parts per billion is a 1,000-fold lower concentration of H₂S than the 10 parts per million deemed acceptable in the CLA Report.

Dr. Paul Connett, professor of environmental chemistry and toxicology at St. Lawrence University, and researcher and international consultant in the areas of waste management and toxic issues, stated, "The hydrogen sulfide levels that have been reported at Playa Vista are of great concern from a health hazard point of view. Long-term consequences to the immune system is of particular concern to developing children.

"H₂S is more toxic than Hydrogen Cyanide," Connett cautioned. "I urge the Los Angeles City Council to reject any and all attempts to develop areas which promise to generate hydrogen sulfide over an indefinite period of time."

The City Council has scheduled a vote on Tuesday, June 11, to release \$33.6 million in low-cost housing construction bond funds and to consider the issuance of an estimated \$400 million in Mello-Roos bonds to finance infrastructure for the Playa Vista developers.

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