

Date: Jan. 17, 2017

To Mayor Perotte and City Council members
Re: Item E1, Ellwood Canyon Gas Leak

I appreciate the fact that the County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) report on the so-called Ellwood Incident of last October 9-11 is being shared tonight with the public and Goleta City Council members. It lays out serious, even potentially lethal, lapses in the current systems to alert the public and/or guard against the release in populated areas of a gas so deadly that only 100 parts per million (PPM) of it knocks out the nose's ability to detect the danger and can kill humans at this concentration, according to the report.

Unfortunately, the county report(s) spend too much time congratulating its responding agencies--Fire, APCD, Health Dept., OEM, etc.--for their incident collaboration and gives only passing mention to their multiple failures to promptly notify the residents most affected by the well gas in the neighboring City of Goleta. Indeed, the OEM report (and the City's complaint letter) also clearly demonstrate how casually Venoco takes its responsibilities to share vital information affecting public health with the City.

Apparently, the oil company thinks its EOF fence-line monitoring devices, most of which registered the toxic gas drifting over from Ellwood Canyon, is also the boundary for its reporting duty. When triggered, these six monitors automatically connect to the APCD by email. Unfortunately, the "incident" happened early on a Sunday and was not detected by APCD until that evening, well after citizens' complaints initiated the county investigation.

I wonder if it would have made a difference to the whole response if APCD had forced Venoco to replace, possibly with a portable monitor, the permanent monitor it had to remove from on the Mariposa elder care property in 2015. Instead APCD accepted the company's claim that it couldn't find another location and allowed that safeguard to lapse.

When will Venoco find a suitable location in West Goleta for this monitor? According to the OEM report, it took until Sunday night to identify the source of the noxious gas--a

water well drilling operation--even though the well drillers' personal monitors had been "activated." Apparently neither the property owner nor the drilling team reported this fact to county or city officials. Much time was lost trying to track down citizens' reports of disturbing odors and some people had to evacuate their homes or fell ill.

Equally incredible is that the APCD had its sole hydrogen sulfide monitor on repair and lost time going to San Luis Obispo APCD to borrow theirs. It makes no sense to have only one device in the area when thousands of people could be potentially exposed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Vic Cox

Goleta resident