



Department of
Toxic Substances
Control

*The Mission of the
Department of
Toxic Substances
Control is to
provide the highest
level of safety, and
to protect public
health and the
environment from
toxic harm.*



State of California



California
Environmental
Protection Agency

Fact Sheet, February 2010

Methane Mitigation Plan for new Middle College High School Available for Review

A draft methane mitigation plan for the proposed new Middle College High School site (Site) located within the Los Angeles Southwest College (LASC) campus is available for public review and comment. The draft plan, called a Removal Action Workplan (RAW), was submitted by the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) for the proposed Site to the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).

The DTSC is part of the California Environmental Protection Agency. DTSC oversees soil and groundwater investigations at proposed new or expanding school sites, and evaluates property for potential hazardous materials or contamination that may pose a risk to school children, the staff or faculty. If contamination is found, DTSC oversees the cleanup of the property in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations.

This Fact Sheet Provides a Brief Summary of:

- Why Mitigation Is Necessary
- History and Operations at the Site
- Environmental Investigations
- Proposed Mitigation Options
- California Environmental Quality Act
- Next Steps
- Where to Find the Documents
- Who to Contact for More Information

Why Mitigation Is Necessary

Environmental investigations found methane and hydrogen sulfide in soil gas above acceptable levels. **There is no immediate health risk because the public is not exposed to the methane and hydrogen sulfide, since the contaminants are located**

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

February 22, 2010 – March 22, 2010

DTSC encourages you to review and comment on the draft RAW. DTSC is holding a public comment period beginning February 22, 2010 and ending March 22, 2010. The draft RAW and other related project documents for this school site are available for review and public comment at the locations listed on page 3. The DTSC will make a final decision on the RAW after all public comments have been reviewed and considered. Please submit written comments in the enclosed postage paid envelope postmarked **by March 22, 2010**; or by email or no later than 5 p.m. on the deadline date to:

Christina Fu, DTSC Public Participation Specialist
5796 Corporate Avenue, Cypress, CA 90630
cfu@dtsc.ca.gov

Si desea información en español, comuníquese con Jeanne Garcia al (818) 717-6573



underground beneath concrete, asphalt, or landscape. Should current conditions change, contaminated soil gases may be brought up to the surface and accumulate in buildings. Methane is non-toxic, but could present a fire or explosion hazard if it accumulates in buildings. Long-term exposure to elevated levels of hydrogen sulfide can cause adverse health effects. In order to protect future students and staff of the new school, DTSC requested that the school district prepare a mitigation plan. The DTSC will oversee the mitigation measures that will be installed during construction of the new school and will ensure that it is performed in a manner that does not harm people or the environment.

The methane and hydrogen sulfide identified within this Site is likely associated with the underlying Howard Townsite Oilfield and historical oil production activities.

History and Operations at the Site

Agricultural uses began at the site as early as 1928. The plant facilities for the college campus were then constructed in 1967. And the swimming pools and pump house were built in 1994. The site is within the boundaries of the Howard Townsite Oil Field; however, there was no oil production on the site.

The existing Middle College High School opened in the year 1989, and moved into temporary bungalows in the southwestern portion of the college campus.

Environmental Investigations

A Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) was conducted in 2008. During the investigation, methane was detected in 15 of 31 soil gas samples. No elevated concentrations were found near the surface. Hydrogen sulfide was detected at low levels in two samples.

Based on the low levels detected, the potential for hazards to site occupants are extremely low. However, to account for unforeseen future changes in site conditions, DTSC recommended a RAW be prepared. The RAW objectives are to prevent potential buildup of methane and hydrogen sulfide beneath the new school structure and to minimize the potential for methane and hydrogen sulfide to infiltrate and accumulate in enclosed building spaces.

Proposed Mitigation Options

The following two cleanup options were considered for this site:

Alternative 1 – No Action

Alternative 2 – Membrane Barriers and Passive Venting with Contingent Air Sweep

Based on careful analysis, Alternative 2 is recommended because it is protective of human health and the environment, is permanent, and has a reasonable cost.

If this alternative is approved, the methane mitigation system will allow for the installation of an underground gas mitigation system to collect, vent, and monitor for the presence of the gases beneath the site.

Methane and hydrogen sulfide detected beneath the site behave in a similar manner and present similar risks, so the mitigation measures will be the same for both gases. The proposed approach presented in the RAW includes the following options:

- **Passive Venting Systems:** A system of pipes, placed beneath the school building, to vent gases coming up from the soil. Passive venting will also be used in the hardscape areas.
- **Horizontal Membrane Barrier:** A thick flexible plastic liner placed underneath the foundation to prevent passage of gases into the building.
- **Contingent Air Sweep System:** A network of sub-slab pipes connected to air injection piping to sweep air outward toward building perimeter.
- **Utility Trench Dams:** A barrier around all electrical, gas, water, and/or sewer lines located in trenches under the building.
- **Conduit Seals:** A barrier around openings for electrical and cable lines.
- **Enhanced Building Ventilation:** Continuous mechanical ventilation in the swimming pool area and the pool chemical storage room.
- **Sand Dispersion Layer:** An 18-inch layer of sand in the exterior landscaped area, covered by 18 inches of a soil to create a buffer zone to help prevent gases from accumulating.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

In compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), DTSC has prepared a draft Notice of Exemption (NOE) for this project. The NOE states that the proposed mitigation will not have a significant negative effect on human health and the environment.

Next Steps

At the close of the public comment period, the DTSC will review and consider all public comments and make any necessary revisions to the Draft RAW prior to final approval. A Response to Comments document will be mailed to anyone who makes a comment and provides their name and address.

After DSTC approval of the final RAW, the methane mitigation system would be installed concurrently with construction of the new school. A Removal Action Completion Report (RACR) will be prepared and submitted to DTSC for final approval following installation of the gas mitigation system. After approval, DTSC will certify that the school site is safe for occupancy.

After construction and prior to the school opening, DTSC will enter into a legal agreement with LACCD/LAUSD to establish the roles and responsibilities of all parties to ensure the long-term safe Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of the new gas mitigation system. This will require LACCD/LAUSD to inspect and monitor the system on a regular basis and following any earthquake activity, and to submit O&M reports to DTSC documenting the performance of the gas mitigation system.

Where to Find the Documents

The draft RAW and other Site related documents are available for review at the following locations:

Middle College High School

Main Office
11750 South Western Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90047
Phone: (323) 820-9343

Washington Preparatory High School

Main Office
10860 South Denker Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90047
Phone: (323) 418-4000

Mark Twain Branch Library

Reference Desk
9621 South Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90003
Phone: (323) 755-4088

Department of Toxic Substances Control

Regional Records Office
5796 Corporate Avenue
Cypress, CA 90630
Contact: (714) 484-5337, Julie Johnson
www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov

Who to Contact for More Information

If you have any questions about the project or cleanup activities, please contact:

Aslam Shareef
DTSC Project Manager
(714) 484-5308
ashareef@dtsc.ca.gov

Christina Fu
DTSC Public Participation Specialist
(714) 484-5488 or
Toll Free 1-866-495-5651 (Press 4 twice)
cfu@dtsc.ca.gov

Media Inquiries:

Jeanne Garcia
DTSC Public Information Officer
(818) 717-6573
jgarcia1@dtsc.ca.gov

Notice to Hearing-Impaired Individuals

You can obtain additional information about the site by using the California State Relay Service at 1 (888) 877-5378 (TDD). Ask them to contact Christina Fu at (714) 484-5488 regarding the project.

