



News Release

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Los Angeles Residents Receive Training for Jobs Cleaning Up Communities Impacted by Exide Facility

SACRAMENTO – Thirty-one students will graduate today in Los Angeles after weeks of training through the Department of Toxic Substances Control’s Workforce for Environmental Restoration in Communities (WERC) program.

The program was created to train under-employed residents who live in the communities impacted by the former Exide Technologies facility in Vernon. The training in environmental sampling and assessment field work will help them secure jobs with companies contracted to clean up around the facility.

“We are proud to be developing this program as part of Governor Brown’s \$176.6 million plan to sample and clean up the communities surrounding the former Exide facility,” said DTSC Director Barbara A. Lee. “The WERC program is training students to help revitalize communities impacted by multiple sources of pollution, and is part of DTSC’s commitment to advancing environmental justice.”

The graduation ceremony is taking place today at 5:30 p.m. at the Los Angeles Trade-Technical College (LATTC), Aspen Hall, Room 101, located at 400 W. Washington Blvd., in Los Angeles.

“This is a great investment for our education,” said Elizabeth Ines, a graduate from Boyle Heights. “It’s opening doors to other jobs that I didn’t have before...and I am helping out my community even more by being of service to them.”

Assembly Majority Whip Miguel Santiago, D-Los Angeles, also praised the program. “I’m thrilled to congratulate the first graduating class of DTSC’s WERC program. I know these students worked very hard and are excited to participate in restoring their own communities.”

Santiago added, “As the state representative for this area and author of AB 118, which authorized this funding, I am proud to see aspects of the program beginning to work. Make no mistake though, while this is an important first step, there is still much work ahead of all us to clean up these contaminated neighborhoods.”

The WERC program aims to employ trained community residents by promoting the use of targeted local hire requirements for contracting employment of women, disadvantaged workers and local community residents for jobs that may otherwise be filled by workers from other areas.

As part of the program, at least 40 percent of the total hours worked on the Exide project will be performed by residents who live in Los Angeles, Maywood, Commerce, Huntington Park, Bell, East Los Angeles and Vernon.

DTSC is collaborating with workforce development experts at the Los Angeles Trade-Technical College to enroll students in college and continue developing the program with community partners. Today's graduates received training from the UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program, the National Association of Training and Environmental Consulting International, Inc. (NATEC), and ThermoFisher Scientific.

The students are certified as Lead Sampling Technicians by the California Department of Public Health to safely perform lead sampling in their communities. They are also certified in Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response Standard (HAZWOPER), and received health and safety training through this program. DTSC is working with two lead sampling contractors, Arcadis Environmental and EFI Global, Inc., who are interviewing students today for positions.

Program graduate, and member of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Augustine Perez said, "Hopefully this will get more people involved. It provides them with a higher paying job than what is being offered in low-income communities right now. With the proper education, they can get better opportunities in the future."

This program is part of the \$176.6 million approved by Governor Brown to ensure all residential properties, schools, daycare centers and parks within the 1.7-mile radius of the Exide Technologies facility are tested and contaminated soil removed where lead levels are the highest and potential exposure the greatest.

For more information on the testing and cleanup, please visit www.dtsc.ca.gov/Exide

What lawmakers are saying about DTSC's Workforce for Environmental Restoration in Communities (WERC) program:

"Graduates of the Department of Toxic Substances Control's WERC program – trained in lead sampling and field work – are taking an active role in cleaning up communities impacted by Exide's contamination," said Congressman Xavier Becerra, D-Los Angeles. "I congratulate these individuals for stepping up and serving the public while furthering their own careers. This is how the restoration of neighborhoods surrounding the closed Exide plant should be done – in partnership with the residents who live there."

"I commend WERC's graduates for their commitment to help clean their Exide-contaminated communities," said Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, D-Los Angeles, who represents the site of the former Exide plant and many of the surrounding communities. "The WERC program helps to ensure that individuals from our affected communities have an active role and voice in this cleanup. Thanks to WERC, these graduates have the skills to make their neighborhoods safer and healthier places to live. The graduates will be an invaluable part of the effort to restore the properties scarred by Exide's pollution."

"Congratulations to the first graduating class of the WERC program and to those who follow. Their communities will be stronger and healthier by their work," said Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León. "For years these students have lived with the toxins spewed by Exide. Now they will play an important role in ridding their communities of the dangerous pollutants Exide left behind. I fought hard to fund the WERC program because it is not only an investment in the

people and communities around Exide, it is a small measure in justice for those who fought so hard for the plant's closure."

"Our communities are stronger when residents commit themselves to community and public service," said Senator Ricardo Lara, D-Bell Gardens. "I congratulate the graduates of the Workforce for Environmental Restoration in Communities Program for dedicating their time to assist in the cleanup of the neighborhoods impacted by the Exide contamination. These leaders embody the resilience and diversity of our Southeast and East Los Angeles communities."

"Congratulations, when we train community members to be part of the solution, we not only put people to work but empower our community and create better solutions," said Assemblymember Cristina Garcia, D-Bell Gardens. "Thank you to the community advocates who fought for this to happen. Investing in our community creates long-term change agents and a stronger community."

"I congratulate today's graduates," said Senator Tony Mendoza (D-Artesia). "The WERC program provides an opportunity for residents of communities adversely impacted by the Exide facility to learn employable skills that can immediately be put to use in the clean-up. This is a win-win for the graduates and the community."



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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit www.dtsc.ca.gov. To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

The mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances by restoring contaminated resources, enforcing hazardous waste laws, reducing hazardous waste generation, and encouraging the manufacture of chemically safer products.