



**Kevin de León**

Councilmember, Fourteenth District

July 28, 2022

The Honorable Michael S. Regan  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

**Subject: Support of Funding for the Cleanup of the Former Exide Facility**

Dear Administrator Regan,

As the Los Angeles City Councilmember representing District 14, I am writing to express unwavering support for the recent request submitted by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) designating the former Exide facility in Vernon, CA, along with affected residential properties and parkways surrounding the facility, as a Superfund Site within the US EPA's National Priorities List (NPL).

Remediating the toxic contamination caused by the Exide facility is essential to the health and well-being of residents in the surrounding communities. Designating the Exide facility and surrounding communities as a Superfund site would mean that the site and the surrounding communities will have access to additional federal resources and expertise to required for cleanup.

For more than a century, the former plant operated as a lead acid battery recycling facility. When Exide filed for bankruptcy in 2020, it did so without investigating the full extent of its contamination, and without cleaning up the contamination the State of California identified as originating from the former facility's operations.

In October 2020, a Delaware bankruptcy court allowed Exide to walk away from its obligations and transferred the facility to the newly created Vernon Environmental Response Trust (VERT) under USEPA oversight. Subsequently, VERT hired contractors to remove most of the above-ground structures in accordance with DTSC's guidance using limited funds from a

settlement agreement financed by Exide. VERT's contractor concluded its work on May 1, 2022, and DTSC has engaged a new contractor to ensure operations and maintenance activities and cleanup work continue uninterrupted. Further, DTSC continues with the investigation and cleanup of an estimated 10,000 parcels with lead contamination from the facility in the surrounding communities.

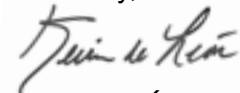
Currently, nearly 3,800 parcels out of as many as 5,940 that are scheduled for cleanup in the area surrounding the former Exide facility have been remediated by DTSC from state funds. These parcels range from residential properties, to schools and daycare centers, and from parks to public rights of way. While DTSC remains committed to a complete cleanup of outstanding properties despite the bankruptcy, more funding is required to fully remediate the impacted parcels.

Residents there continue to face the potential health threats from toxic pollutants left behind on private properties, in public parkways, and other open spaces. I am particularly concerned that despite the documented analysis, there is not a solid commitment for the completion of remediation in Boyle Heights, particularly in public housing and low income properties, such as Estrada Court and Wyvernwood Garden Apartments.

The decades of failure to properly monitor the site has led to widespread contamination that will continue to impact the health and safety of residents in this community until remediations are complete. My constituents are among the most vulnerable to environmental inequalities, particularly those generated by large corporate polluters like Exide. Exide's actions and the resulting impacts are explicitly criminal. We cannot turn a blind eye to toxic pollution this corporation spread in Boyle Heights and other communities of color. The magnitude of Exide's environmental damage on surrounding communities demands a national commitment to increase funding necessary for cleanup.

Thank you for your consideration of this essential step to correcting decades of exploitation and abuse that will not only revitalize these communities but improve the quality of life, health, and economic benefits residents here deserve.

Sincerely,



**KEVIN DE LEÓN**

*Councilmember, 14th District*