



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF VENTURA**
GOVERNMENT CENTER, HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
800 SOUTH VICTORIA AVENUE, VENTURA, CALIFORNIA 93009

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STEVE BENNETT
SUPERVISOR, FIRST DISTRICT
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October 6, 2015

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Recommendation of Supervisor Bennett and Supervisor Parks that Our Board Send a Letter to the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) Opposing Their Acceptance of a Citizen's Petition to Put Aside Carefully Conducted Independent Studies on Health Risk Assessments, and also Oppose Replacing The Studies with a New Health Risk Assessment Conducted by the Federal Government, One of the Polluters of the Site; and Request the CEO's Office Communicate Our Position to Our Legislative Representatives

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Send a letter to the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) opposing their acceptance of a citizen's petition to put aside carefully conducted independent studies on health risk assessments, and also oppose replacing the studies with a new health risk assessment conducted by the federal government, one of the polluters of the site.
2. Request the CEO's Office to communicate our position to our legislative representatives.

DISCUSSION:

Beginning in the 1940s the federal government conducted rocket and nuclear testing activities at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) in Ventura County. The work was conducted with substantial disregard for the environment. One of its nuclear reactors experienced a partial nuclear meltdown in 1959, and two other reactors experienced accidents with significant fuel damage, causing releases of radioactivity into the air. This, in addition to napalm and dioxin incineration in open-air burn pits, dumping of over 500,000 gallons of trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchlorate, and contamination from over the 50 years of operations, left the site highly polluted with radioactive and chemical contaminants. The parties responsible for cleaning up SSFL are DOE, NASA and the Boeing Company.

Because of concerns about conflicts of interest in the federal government when assessing whether or not its own environmental damage caused harm, community members and elected officials insisted that health studies be conducted by researchers independent of the federal government. Eventually, ATSDR agreed to fund an independent contractor to select and oversee independent researchers to perform the studies. The ATSDR-funded independent studies and those done for the Oversight Panel identified evidence of potential offsite risks from SSFL activities, including that the incidence rate for a number of different cancers was greater among residents living within 2 miles of SSFL than among residents living more than 5 miles from SSFL, and there was potential for chronic public exposures through air inhalation, well water and crop ingestion. ATSDR was given the right to review and comment on the draft reports before they were released. The findings were presented in public meetings, and the reports were released in 2006 and 2007.

In 2010, legally binding cleanup agreements were entered into by NASA and DOE with California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) requiring all of the detectable radioactive and chemical contamination at their SSFL operations be cleaned up to background. Also in 2010, DTSC declared that under its cleanup requirements for all sites in the state, cleanup is based on current zoning and County General Plan land use designations, which for SSFL would require cleanup to the most protective standards, equivalent to a cleanup to background.

It is a concern that recent actions by the ATSDR to replace the independent studies with one conducted by the federal government could lead to a recommendation that the federal government break its cleanup commitments.

ATSDR reports it is acting in response to a citizen's petition. However, the petition is from one individual, a former official of SSFL who worked as a contractor for the nuclear industry. It should also be noted that ATSDR did not consult with local elected officials or the independent epidemiological investigators involved in the SSFL issue prior to accepting the petition.

The County of Ventura has repeatedly endorsed the cleanup of all contamination at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. The federal government contaminated this site in our county; ATSDR reviewed and accepted independent health risk assessments; and the federal government signed binding agreements to clean up all the contamination. ATSDR should not act to breach the independence of the studies or engage in efforts that could lead to the federal government's reversal of its cleanup commitments.

Sincerely,



Steve Bennett
Supervisor, First District



Linda Parks
Supervisor, Second District

Attachment: Letter to ATSDR



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Tom Frieden, MD, MPH
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Pat Breysse, PHD
Director, National Center for Environmental Health and
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
4770 Buford Hwy, NE
Atlanta, GA 30341-3717

Re: Santa Susana Field Laboratory

Dear Dr. Frieden and Dr. Breysse:

In 2010, legally binding cleanup agreements were entered into by NASA and DOE with California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) requiring all of the detectible radioactive and chemical contamination at their SSFL operations be cleaned up to background. Also in 2010 DTSC declared that under its cleanup requirements for all sites in the state, cleanup is based on current zoning and County General Plan land use designations, which for SSFL would require cleanup to the most protective standards, equivalent to a cleanup to background.

It is of concern that recent actions by the ATSDR to replace the independent studies with one conducted by the federal government could lead to a recommendation that the federal government break its cleanup commitments.

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Dr. Tom Frieden, MD, MPH
Dr. Pat Breyse, PhD
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The Ventura County Board of Supervisors urges you to reverse the recent ATSDR decision.

Sincerely,

Kathy I. Long, Chair
Supervisor, Third District