



CITY OF CARSON

Legislation Text

File #: 2021-840, Version: 1

Report to Mayor and City Council

Monday, October 25, 2021

Discussion

SUBJECT:

**CONSIDER AN UPDATE ON THE DOMINGUEZ CHANNEL FOUL ODOR AND
CONSIDER RATIFYING A PROCLAMATION PROCLAIMING THE EXISTENCE OF A
LOCAL EMERGENCY IN THE CITY OF CARSON AND REQUESTING A COUNTY AND
GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF EMERGENCY AND PRESIDENTIAL
DECLARATION OF DISASTER (CITY COUNCIL)**

I. SUMMARY

The Carson City Manager, acting in her capacity as the City's Director of Emergency Services, has determined that the long-term health effects due to chronic exposure to hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) is of the highest concern and the situation is now of such length, severity, and magnitude that the effective response is beyond the capabilities of the City of Carson and has proclaimed that a Local Emergency as defined in the California Government Code §8558(c), and Carson Municipal Code §3705 exists in the City of Carson.

This action by the Carson City Council is to ratify the declaration of local emergency. City Council shall review, within 30 days, until such Local Emergency is terminated, the need for continuing the Local Emergency at the earliest possible date that conditions warrant.

II. RECOMMENDATION

1. RATIFY the Proclamation Proclaiming the Existence of a Local Emergency in the City of Carson and Requesting a County and Governor's Proclamation of Emergency and Presidential Declaration of Disaster Proclamation and Presidential Declaration of Disaster Proclamation Proclaiming the Existence of Local Emergency in the City of Carson and Requesting a County and Governor's Proclamation of Emergency and Presidential Declaration of Disaster; and
2. ORDER that a copy of this Proclamation be forwarded to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors with the request that they proclaim the County of Los Angeles to be in a state of emergency; and that a copy to be forwarded to the Governor of California with the request that the Governor proclaim the City of Carson and the

County of Los Angeles to be in a state of emergency or a concurrence from the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and further that the Governor requests a presidential declaration of disaster; and

3. REQUEST that all relevant county, state, and federal regulatory agencies with oversight in, near, or over the Dominguez Channel are requested to expedite any and all permitting processes involving the immediate cleanup and restoration of the channel waters, bottoms, and banks under a state of emergency.

III. ALTERNATIVES

IV. BACKGROUND

On October 4, 2021, a noxious odor described as smelling like "rotten eggs", later determined to be H₂S, was reported to the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) by the City of Carson. A few days later the strength of the odor became much stronger and pervasive through the City of Carson, and AQMD and Los Angeles County Public Works investigation teams concentrated their efforts in and near the Dominguez Channel. October 8, 2021, AQMD, Los Angeles County Fire Department-Health Hazmat, and Public Health teams responded to the Dominguez Channel and detected elevated levels of H₂S; and H₂S can cause adverse health effects at both acute and chronic exposure levels, and Carson residents have reported such effects, including dizziness, headaches, eye and throat irritation, nausea, vomiting, and other similar symptoms of H₂S exposure.

On October 11, 2021, both the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Carson City Council declared a public nuisance due to the foul odor from the Dominguez Channel and its negative impacts on residents living within its close proximity.

Los Angeles County Public Works Department (DPW) has been tasked with developing the remedy for the odor over the short-term and for the underlying problem, which is now believed to be a significant die-off of material in approximately a two mile stretch of the Channel through Carson, leading to the loss of dissolved oxygen in the water and the anaerobic digestion of material at the bottom of the channel. Such digestion produces H₂S as a byproduct. On October 15, DPW began to spray Epoleon, a chemical neutralizing agent, in Dominguez Channel and stated that it would take three to five days to begin to be effective. Widespread application of Epoleon began on Monday, October 18.

The application of Epoleon is coupled with the installation of a nano aeration system, which will be located in four locations along the affected stretch. The purpose of the nano bubblers is to introduce small air bubbles into the water which will increase the level of dissolved oxygen. Dissolved oxygen will begin to change the decomposition from anaerobic to aerobic which will reduce the production of the H₂S and the noxious smell.

Over the long term, DPW has advised that the extraction of the excess dead organic material from the Dominguez Channel and restoration of the channel bottom and banks is the solution to the root cause of the problem and it will take two to three months for planning and permitting with county, state, and federal regulatory agencies before work can be initiated. While this is welcome as a long-term solution, the extraction of the material

could be a lengthy process at some point in 2022 and could itself create additional odor impacts.

We have invited the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works to make a short oral presentation to provide more detail on its remediation efforts and assistance programs, described below. The City will also provide an update on its call center activities and its own assistance programs for residents.

Carson has a majority-minority residential population of African American, Hispanic, and Asian-American and Pacific Islanders, as well as a significant population who are low or fixed income, have disabilities or access and functional needs, or are senior citizens, and that this population has suffered historical as well as current day public health and environmental inequities.

Businesses in the City of Carson are also suffering from lost business due to the overpowering smell of H₂S.

Both the County of Los Angeles and the City of Carson have developed programs to assist affected residents obtain relocation to hotels outside the immediate affected area, as well as air purifiers and HEPA filters for their HVAC systems. The County also pays a per diem to relocated residents. As of the writing of this report, the City of Carson has processed nearly 3,000 calls at its call center at City Hall and the County has handled about the same number. The City's call center runs through the weekend and will run 7 days a week during this emergency.

The Local Emergency proclamations from the City and county, and state and federal disaster declarations will expedite the provision of county, state, and federal resources and relief from certain county, state, and federal regulatory and environmental permitting processes.

V. FISCAL IMPACT

So far the City has appropriated \$300,000 for its local response to the issue for staffing, air purifiers, air filters, and hotel relocation. While most of these expenditures may be subject to a Reimbursement Agreement between the City and the County of Los Angeles, we expect other impacts. Carson may lose significant sales tax revenue from loss of business in the affected area and may incur future unforeseen costs from the short-term and long-term impacts of the event.

VI. EXHIBITS

1. Proclamation Proclaiming the Existence of a Local Emergency in the City of Carson and Requesting a County and Governor's Proclamation of Emergency and Presidential Declaration of Disaster Proclamation and Presidential Declaration of Disaster Proclamation Proclaiming the Existence of Local Emergency in the City of Carson and Requesting a County and

Governor's Proclamation of Emergency and Presidential Declaration of Disaster (To Be Provided).

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