UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Brad Sherman
United States House of Representatives
1030 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Sherman:

Thank you for your letter of December 10, 2015, to Administrator Gina McCarthy regarding the gas leak at the Southern California Gas Company (SoCal Gas) Natural Gas Storage Facility in Aliso Canyon, Los Angeles County. Administrator McCarthy has asked me to respond on her behalf.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency shares your concern about the public health and environmental effects of the gas release and has already been investigating the incident. In addition to sending an information request under the authority of the Clean Air Act to SoCal Gas on December 18, U.S. EPA Region 9 is participating in daily operational calls with State and local regulators to stay abreast of developments in controlling the gas release and assisting local residents. Two Region 9 on-scene coordinators toured the Aliso Canyon site with the Los Angeles County Fire and Hazardous Materials Unit and representatives from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Given that the Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Facility is regulated under the federal Pipeline Safety Act, U.S. EPA also contacted the U.S. Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration regarding its authorities to take action. We are in contact with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and the California Department of Conservation, Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR). DOGGR has issued two orders to SoCal Gas, requiring it to provide information on the leaking well, develop plans for expeditiously capturing the escaping gas, stopping the leak, and communicating with state and local regulators. The CPUC is also conducting an investigation to assess SoCal Gas actions before and after the well failure that resulted in the methane gas release. This includes public notification and issues related to operation and maintenance of the storage facility. CPUC has requested information from SoCal Gas and, in coordination with DOGGR, directed SoCal Gas to hire an independent third party to conduct a root cause analysis of the well blowout.

Local authorities such as the South Coast Air Quality Management District and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health have also issued orders to SoCal Gas. The latter order requires SoCal Gas to provide temporary relocation to residents, and hundreds of households have either relocated or are in the process of relocating. SoCal Gas has established a community center in the nearby Porter Ranch community to answer questions and assist residents with temporary relocation and claims.

We are pleased that our state and local partners are taking these important steps to protect public health and safety, and we will continue to investigate and monitor the situation. We stand ready to help in any way if our assistance is requested pending the results of our investigation.

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If you have further questions, please have your staff contact EPA's Congressional Liaison, Brent Maier, at (415) 947-4256, maier.brent@epa.gov, or Dan Meer, Assistant Director for Emergency Response, Preparedness and Prevention, at (415) 972-3132, meer.daniel@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

for Jared Blumenfeld 24 Dec. 2015