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State and County Officials to Discuss Safety Ordinance to Protect Benicians

Benicia remains only Bay Area refinery town without Industry Safety Ordinance

Benicia, CA – This evening, community advocacy groups will inform the Benicia City Council of a Town Hall meeting that will explore newly updated state and local industrial safety regulations and the benefits of a local Industrial Safety Ordinance, or ISO. This Town Hall meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 14, 2017, at the Benicia Public Library in the Doña Benicia Room.

In the wake of the month-long flaring incident at the Valero Benicia refinery that began on May 5, 2017 – and the tons of toxic air pollution - members of Benicians for a Safe and Healthy Community and other local organizations have joined together to advocate that the Benicia City Council adopt a local Industrial Safety Ordinance, or ISO. An ISO will help avoid and minimize incidents and add needed protections to our community.

“The month-long May 5 flaring incident was another wake-up call for Benicia,” said Andrés Soto of Benicians for a Safe and Healthy Community “We need to have the tools and resources for community safety, such as mandatory incident reporting to the City.”

Currently, Benicia is the only refinery town in the Bay Area not protected by an ISO.

“Benicians deserve the same protections from industrial incidents as the other refinery towns in the Bay Area,” said Roger Straw, of The Benicia Independent.

In Contra Costa County, the Hazardous Materials Division of the Health Department is responsible for enforcing the ordinance on the three refineries in the county’s unincorporated areas – Shell, Tesoro and Phillips 66. The City of Richmond has an ordinance that mirrors the county ISO, and contracts with Contra Costa County for enforcement activities.

If the ISO is adopted by Benicia, Contra Costa County Hazardous Materials Division would be agreeable to assisting with the city for inspections, enforcement and reporting activities.

Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia will speak on how the county has been able to utilize the ISO to improve health and safety at the refineries. Gioia will discuss the benefits of additional local authority. Staff from Contra Costa Hazardous Materials, Cal EPA and Cal OSHA will speak. Solano County Environmental Health Division was also invited to take part.

“This is an important opportunity for Benicians to come learn and ask questions about how an Industrial Safety Ordinance can improve Benicia’s community health and safety,” said Ralph Dennis, Chair of Progressive Democrats of Benicia.

Co-sponsors of this event are Benicians for a Safe and Healthy Community, The Benicia Independent, Progressive Democrats of Benicia, Solano County Supervisor Monica Brown, Carquinez Patriotic Resistance, United Democrats of Solano County, and Communities for a Better Environment.

For more information about the Town Hall meeting or the Industrial Safety Ordinance contact Andrés Soto at 510.237.6866 or andres@cbecal.org.