
Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study Virtual Town Hall Questions & Answers: Part 1

Wednesday September 30, 2020¹

Panelists

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County Health Officer

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Chief Science Officer

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Facilitator

Meeting Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Azy6AM06YFE&feature=youtu.be>

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Meeting Agenda

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Welcome and Opening Remarks | 6:00 – 6:20 pm |
| Process Overview | 6:20 – 6:35 pm |
| Scientific Oversight Committee | 6:35 – 6:45 pm |
| Public Comment/Q&A | 6:45 – 7:55 pm |
| Closing Comments | 7:55 – 8:00 pm |



Health Study

Health Study Process

How long will the Health Study be?

- As described in the Settlement, the Health Study will be a maximum of 10 years in length. After the first 3 years, the Scientific Oversight Committee (SOC) will conduct an evaluation to determine whether the Health Study should continue and will be evaluated on an annual basis. The SOC evaluation of study progress will be based on a scientific analysis of whether the Health Study is likely to meet the predetermined Health Study goals established by the SOC.

What methods will be used in the Health Study?

- The Health Study researchers will determine the specific study design(s) and methods used in the Health Study.

Why is the Health Study taking so long?

- Funding for this study is provided through a settlement agreement between the State Attorney General, the County of Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles City Attorney with SoCalGas which was finalized in February 2019. Public Health launched the planning phase in March 2019, beginning with a [Community Orientation Session](#).
- In March 2016, Public Health conducted a door-to-door Community Assessment for Public Health Response (CASPER) of symptoms



experienced by residents of the community impacted by the Aliso Canyon gas blowout. This assessment found that 81% of residents experienced health impacts during the blowout and 63% continued to report symptoms after the blowout, [see full report](#). Public Health determined that the likely cause of the illnesses observed in residents were the chemicals that SoCal Gas injected into the well in late October 2015 in an effort to plug the well. As highlighted in Public Health reports, the observed symptoms (including nosebleeds and extensive contact sensitivity) could not be explained by what is known about methane gas, the odorants, or the trace carcinogens contained in the gas emissions. Public Health concluded that a comprehensive, long-term Health Study was needed to shed light on these unanswered questions.

- One of the major objectives of the Health Study is to assess possible long-term health impacts and risks associated with the blowout. Public Health aims to have the research solicitation released in the spring of 2021 and a contract awarded to the third party researchers in fall or winter of 2021.

What is the anticipated schedule for release of an RFP to conduct the Health Study?

- The planned release of the research solicitation is the Spring of 2021. This timeline is dependent on guidance provided by the SOC and input from the community.



When does Public Health anticipate awarding a contract to conduct the Health Study?

- The timeline for awarding a contract to third party researchers to conduct the Health Study depends on the type of research solicitation used. Public Health anticipates awarding the contract by the end of 2021.

Health Study Participation

Can any community member (including SoCalGas employees and people who have moved away from the neighborhoods surrounding the Aliso Canyon gas storage facility) be considered as subjects for the Health Study? How does one find out if they qualify? How many subjects will the Health Study Include?

- The Scientific Oversight Committee is tasked with deciding the specific goals of the Health Study which will be incorporated into the RFP and released in the Spring of 2021. Researcher applicants will need to be responsive to the RFP to be considered for funding and will propose research design(s) accordingly. Proposals may include human subject research (meaning direct examination of subjects). Such proposals may include details on the number and characteristics (such as place of residence and occupation) of research subjects.

Will information regarding Health Study participation be sent to interested community members?



- If the Health Study researchers conduct human subject research, they will determine the selection criteria and the process for identifying and contacting community members who meet the criteria. In the interim, community members who are interested in receiving monthly study updates can sign up for [the monthly newsletter](#). If you would like your contact information to be shared with the Health Study researchers, please fill out the [Health Study contact form](#).

Samples

If community members have personal health information (such as biological samples or test results) which may be useful for the Health Study, who should they contact?

- It is likely that the researchers will not accept biological samples from community members. There are specific protocols that should be followed if samples were to be accepted. Researchers will be sharing information with community members on their study methods and related opportunities to participate in research activities, if applicable.

Community Involvement

Will Public Health provide regular updates to the public? How often?

- Yes, Public Health provides regular updates to the public through several communication channels: monthly newsletters, public



meetings, and regular updates to the Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study website. The future researchers will also be responsible for providing regular updates to the community.

- Sign up for the [monthly newsletter here](#).
- Find information on upcoming public meetings by visiting the Public Information page of the [Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study website](#).

Will Public Health assign a contact person to help coordinate information to the public?

- Yes, Public Health has a Health Study Community Engagement Specialist, who is responsible for communicating key updates to the public and coordinating community input on health study activities. The Community Engagement Specialist works closely with the Research Development Manager to ensure that community input is provided to the Scientific Oversight Committee and in the future, to the researchers.
- Stay informed by visiting the [ACDHRS website](#) and subscribing to the monthly newsletter.
- If you would like your contact information to be shared with the Health Study researchers, please fill out [this online form](#).

Health Effects/Symptoms



Have community members reported getting body tremors in the aftermath of the gas blowout?

- Community members reported a wide variety of health symptoms after the gas blowout and the most common symptoms included eye, nose and/or throat irritation; headache or migraine; respiratory problems; stress; dizziness or lightheadedness; nausea or vomiting; nosebleeds; skin rash or irritation; diarrhea; and fever (see the full results in the [Aliso Canyon Gas Leak Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response](#) final report).

Long-term Health Concerns

If the Aliso Canyon blowout will result in long-term health impacts, when can impacted communities expect to see these health impacts and what types of health impacts should they expect?

- The purpose of the Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study is to contribute to the understanding of the short and long-term health impacts of exposure to natural gas due to the Aliso Canyon blowout and may include certain types of health impacts and their timing (i.e., the length of time after exposure which the health outcome may present).

Data

Health Data



Has Public Health collected health information from community members who got sick but never reported to Public Health and are unaware there was a blowout?

- No, Public Health has not collected health information on symptoms from clinics or other outside organizations. The Scientific Oversight Committee will provide guidance on the health study goals and types of assessments that should be pursued by researchers.

Cancer Rates

Are cancer rates higher in Porter Ranch than in the rest of the Valley or City of Los Angeles?

- Researchers at the USC Cancer Surveillance Program are currently designing a preliminary cancer investigation to determine whether cancer rates in the communities surrounding the Aliso Canyon gas storage facility are higher than expected. The purpose of this investigation is to help increase our understanding of cancer rates and related trends, and to inform future areas of research.

South Coast Air Quality Management District

Money Awarded

SCAQMD has been awarded \$1 million for a health study, and [Public Health has 2 members](#) sitting on the advisory board to guide it. Why



hasn't this study been started and will it be included in the \$25 million Health Study?

- South Coast AQMD issued a Request for Proposal and unfortunately, did not receive a research proposal that was responsive to the request. Public Health's members on the advisory board have advised South Coast AQMD to ensure that the \$1 million goes back to the impacted community to assist with future environmental health monitoring and/or research needs. To stay updated on the current Health Study updates please visit [South Coast AQMD– Aliso Canyon Health Study](#).

