

Order Instituting Investigation on the Commission's Own Motion into the Operations and Practices of Southern California Gas Company with Respect to the Aliso Canyon storage facility and the release of natural gas, and Order to Show Cause Why Southern California Gas Company Should Not Be Sanctioned for Allowing the Uncontrolled Release of Natural Gas from Its Aliso Canyon Storage Facility. (U904G).

I.19-06-016
(Filed June 27, 2019)

CHAPTER VIII

PREPARED REPLY TESTIMONY OF DARRELL JOHNSON ON BEHALF OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GAS COMPANY (U 904 G)

March 20, 2020

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4 **CHAPTER VIII**

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7 **I. INTRODUCTION.**

8 The purpose of my prepared reply testimony on behalf of Southern California Gas
9 Company (SoCalGas) is to address certain allegations in the testimony of Ms. Margaret Felts on
10 behalf of the California Public Utilities Commission’s (Commission) Safety and Enforcement
11 Division (SED).¹ In Ms. Felts’s testimony, she alleges that SoCalGas is in violation of
12 California Public Utilities Code Section 451 (Section 451) because SoCalGas “did not disclose
13 to the Department of Public Health that the natural gas released from October 23, 2015 to
14 February 12, 2016 contained crude oil, thereby impairing the Department of Public Health’s
15 ability to timely study the associated health impacts” (Violation 88).² As further discussed below
16 and evidenced in the attached and the materials referenced in Ms. Felts’s testimony, throughout
17 the incident SoCalGas endeavored to work with the public and government officials to address
18 the leak and mitigate its impacts.

19 **II. SUMMARY OF SED ALLEGED VIOLATION.**

20 Ms. Felts states that SoCalGas violated Section 451 by not disclosing to the Los Angeles
21 Department of Public Health (DPH) that the natural gas released during the incident contained
some crude oil. Ms. Felts further alleges that “[a]t a minimum, this violation begins at least as
early as November 2015, when ‘SoCalGas knew that crude oil was contained in the natural gas
but withheld this information from Public Health,’ and continues until at least February 12, 2016,

¹ SED’s opening testimony was originally served on parties to I.19-06-016 on November 22, 2019 without an identified witness. Subsequently, pursuant to SoCalGas Data Request 2 to SED, SED responded that Ms. Margaret Felts is the sponsoring witness for the entirety of SED’s opening testimony.

² SED Opening Testimony at 51.

1 because SoCalGas “repeatedly stated during the disaster that the contents of the release were
2 limited only to typical components of stored natural gas’ through that date.”³ As acknowledged
3 by SED,⁴ SoCalGas previously responded to the Commission’s concerns on this matter on March
4 21, 2019, detailing, among other things, that it was public knowledge that the Aliso Canyon
5 facility was used for oil production as well as natural gas storage.⁵ In an effort to supplement the
6 information that was already provided, I offer the following additional information, as I was
7 personally involved in communications with various agencies and governmental officials
8 pertaining to the leak.

9 **III. SOCALGAS WAS TRANSPARENT WITH DPH AND OTHER AGENCIES AND**
10 **WORKED JOINTLY TO UNDERSTAND THE EMISSIONS AND INFORM THE**
11 **PUBLIC.**

12 Beginning in December of 2015, Porter Ranch residents began reporting the periodic
13 appearance of brown spots on outdoor surfaces.⁶ Upon learning of these, SoCalGas, in concert
14 with the DPH, began efforts to sample and analyze the spots. This was detailed by DPH in their
15 January 19, 2016 “Update on the Aliso Canyon Storage Facility Gas Leak, Chemical Exposures,
16 and Health Impacts in the Porter Ranch Community:”

17 Since the beginning of December, 2015, Porter Ranch residents have been
18 reporting periodic brown spots on outdoor surfaces, including patio furniture, pool
19 decks, and cars. From December 9-17, SCG collected six wipe samples from cars
20 within the Porter Ranch community and analyzed them for petroleum
21 hydrocarbons and benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylenes (BTEX). The
22 sample results indicate the presence of heavier-end petroleum hydrocarbons
23 consistent with crude oil (carbon chains 21 through 28). BTEX was not detected
24 in any of the samples. SCG reported these drops are likely resulting from an oily
25 mist emanating from the leaking well during strong wind events. To further

³ SED Opening Testimony at 52 (internal citations omitted).

⁴ SED Opening Testimony at 51.

⁵ Available at:

https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/uploadedFiles/CPUCWebsite/Content/News_Room/NewsUpdates/2019/Letter-to-Angelo-J-Bellomo-2019-03-21-1.pdf. To this date DPH has not responded to the letter.

⁶ Ex. VII-1.

1 investigate the occurrence of the oily mist, SCG has placed horizontal and vertical
2 plexi-glass plates along the facility fence-line, immediately adjacent to the
3 community. The highest concentration of spots was found north of the Highlands
4 neighborhood, and SCG has since installed screens over the leaking well, which
5 are designed to capture any new oily mists that may occur. Between January 2
6 and 10, no further accumulation of spots on the plexi-glass plates occurred, and
7 DPH has not received additional reports of new spots in the community. DPH
8 advises that the presence of these spots poses minimal health risk, but residents
9 should avoid touching these spots, as they may could cause skin irritation, and
10 they should avoid eating garden-grown fruits and vegetables with visible spots. In
11 the meantime, SCG is offering free cleaning services to residents for these spots.
12 DPH will continue to review testing results and report findings to the public.⁷

13 Consistent with the above description provided by DPH, I have also attached email
14 communications among SoCalGas, DPH, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment,
15 and the Air Quality Management District (collectively, Agencies) that demonstrate SoCalGas'
16 transparency. Notable aspects of the attached emails include:

- 17 • December 24, 2015 – Email from SoCalGas to Agencies communicating
18 analytical results of the brown spot wipe samples.⁸
- 19 • January 7, 2016 – Email from SoCalGas to DPH and the Air Quality Management
20 District describing the wipe sample analysis and noting some of the analysis
21 indicates the spots are “[c]onsistent with oil.”⁹

22 **IV. CONCLUSION.**

23 Not only was it public knowledge that the facility was used for oil production, but, as
24 demonstrated above, (1) SoCalGas was actively engaged in meetings and conversations with
25 DPH regarding sampling of brown spots in the community, analysis of those samples, and the

⁷ Id.

⁸ Ex. VIII-2.

⁹ Ex. VIII-3.

1 presence of crude oil constituents in the spots; and (2) DPH, based on communications with
2 SoCalGas, was issuing public updates regarding the presence of oil.

3 This concludes my reply testimony.

1 **WITNESS QUALIFICATIONS**

2 My name is Darrell Johnson. My business address is 555 West Fifth Street, Los Angeles,
3 California, 90013. My current position is Environmental Programs Manager within the
4 Operations Support organization at SoCalGas. The Environmental Services organization
5 provides services to both SoCalGas and SDG&E. I joined SoCalGas in 2001 where I served as a
6 Principal Environmental Specialist. I have been in my current position at SoCalGas since 2014.
7 I hold a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from Saint Martin's
8 University.

9 I have previously testified before the Commission.