

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Riddhi S. Patel | Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment | rpatel@crpe-ej.org | 661-865-4881

Yolanda Chacón-Serna | Delano Guardians | yochaconserna@gmail.com | 661-809-4270

Delano Toxics Disaster Finally Sees Cleanup from State Agency

After Years of Advocacy from Delano Community Members, City Sees Progress

Delano, CA — Today, members of the Delano Guardians Committee, a community group working to improve the quality of life in Delano, gathered on Main Street to celebrate the groundbreaking for a new remediation system to remove tetrachloroethylene (PCE) contamination discovered beneath the city's downtown area over 15 years ago. The installation of soil vapor extraction units is the culmination of seven years of community advocacy to push the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to conduct a thorough investigation and clean-up of the site. The chemical has been linked to several dry cleaning operations that operated in downtown Delano. With the help of Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment, a Delano-based environmental justice community based organization, the Delano Guardians first began pushing for remediation in 2015 after DTSC issued a warning to properties in the area about immediate health risks due to significantly elevated indoor air concentrations of the chemical in multiple downtown businesses.

The Delano Guardians recently prompted the Delano City Council to adopt a resolution establishing a Community Advisory Group to continue working with DTSC to ensure a complete and adequate clean up. The Community Advisory Group is currently accepting new members, if community members would like to join they can contact the President of the Delano Guardians, Gloria Herrera at gloriaherrera297@gmail.com or the Sergeant of Arms, Maria Martinez at maria-m1215@prodigy.net.

The Community Advisory Group will be working to address additional PCE contamination found in other parts of Delano and at very high levels in the local groundwater. DTSC has committed to further investigate and remediate these remaining sources of PCE.

After years of community advocacy, the Delano Guardians applaud the initiation of Department of Toxic Substances Control's [cleanup](#) of the Delano plume, but are concerned about the remaining pockets of contamination that have yet to be fully investigated and cleaned.

Background: In 2008, an investigation of a leaking underground storage tank by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board uncovered tetrachloroethylene (PCE) contamination in the groundwater of Downtown Delano, a chemical commonly used in dry cleaning. DTSC confirmed the contamination and identified several dry cleaners and former dry cleaners in the area as the probable source.

Below, Delano community members, including non-profit employees and elected officials, offer some statements regarding the Delano Plume cleanup:

“After years of community pressure to hold the state agency accountable, we finally see this cleanup start with the help of Delano Guardians and the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment now in 2021. This was not the result of any one person, it was the result of numerous Delano community members coming together to demand justice because when we fight, we win.” **said Bryan Osorio, Delano Mayor and City Councilman.**

“Today is a good day for residents and businesses in Delano and this remediation is so overdue. But we need to remain vigilant to make sure that progress continues. PCE poses an ongoing risk to Delano. We call on DTSC to prioritize further investigation to find and remediate all areas impacted by soil contamination and immediately begin clean-up of the groundwater.” **said Ingrid Brostrom, Assistant Director for the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment.**

“The Delano Plume was originally found in 2004 but it seemed like no one was listening. The chemicals that have been found at the plume, mainly PCE along with TCE, are known to cause cancer, dementia, Alzheimer’s, & learning disabilities in children. We are thankful that DTSC is beginning the cleanup, but this is only the beginning. We must keep a continued partnership with the state agency where we make sure they prioritize protecting the public health of Californians.” **said Gloria Herrera, President of the Delano Guardians.**

“I’m unbelievably proud of what we are accomplishing here today. It took numerous years for us to get here, but we are finally seeing this cleanup start. I’ve seen many of my friends and loved ones get sick from our exposure to harmful chemicals. We recognize that we are not the only toxic site that demands cleanup in California and we hope the state agency brings justice to them as well.” **said Maria Martinez, Sergeant of Arms for the Delano Guardians.**

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