



Air Pollution Control District
San Luis Obispo County

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San Luis Obispo
Grand Jury

July 20, 2018

Presiding Judge Ginger E. Garrett
Superior Court of California
1035 Palm Street, Room 355
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

SUBJECT: San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District Response to the Grand Jury Report titled, *Is There A Health Risk From The Dunes? The Answer My Friend, Is Blowing In the Wind.*

Dear Honorable Judge Garrett,

Thank you for giving the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) the opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations provided in the Grand Jury report released in June 2018. We have completed our review of the stated findings and recommendations and would like to respond to the following: Finding F1 and Recommendation R1 a, b and c.

F1: The District does not have an effective system to follow-up with the public, schools, medical clinics, hospitals, or those who sign up to receive AirAware Alerts and Better Breather Alerts.

In response to Finding F1 of the SLO County Grand Jury Report, SLO County APCD would like to further clarify and define the active communication programs related to alerting the public during air quality events.

AirAware Text Notification Program

AirAware Alerts allow anyone with a mobile device to sign up to receive a text notification for various air quality events. In addition to being able to sign up for things such as our press releases or when there may be smoke impacts, users can sign-up to receive "Early Alerts for Blowing Dust Events on the Nipomo Mesa." As explained in the FAQs for the AirAware Alerts, these "early alerts" are sent whenever the CDF Nipomo monitor registers an hourly PM₁₀ concentration above 175 ug/m³ between the hours of 9am and midnight. This value indicates a blowing dust event is underway and a health advisory will likely be issued that day.

Example of a standard AirAware Text for blowing dust: (EARLY AIRAWARE ALERT) Blowing dust detected on the Nipomo Mesa. Visit AIRNOW <<http://bit.ly/NipomoAQI>> to monitor the hourly AQI.

Better Breather Alert

A Better Breather Alert for blowing dust is issued as a general press release. This press release is issued when the hourly PM₁₀ concentration at any of the Nipomo area monitors reach above 300 ug/m³. A Better Breather Alert could also be issued for ozone concentrations. This is most likely to be seen in the summer months in the eastern portion of SLO County.

Example of a standard Better Breather Text for blowing dust (this is sent in addition to a traditional press release: *SLO County APCD Better Breather Alert issued due to blowing dust impacting the Nipomo area today, (date). Find out more at <https://goo.gl/OpnFR>*. The link then takes subscribers to our Press Release page on the website. Currently, all of our Better Breather Alerts are widely distributed across the county to various English and Spanish media outlets, sister agencies, other Air Districts, APCD Board of Directors and more. Staff also follows up on each Better Breather Alert with the individual impacted schools to ensure they are aware of the event and precautions they should take.

Moving forward in the next school year, APCD staff has developed separate distribution lists for all schools countywide and we will be including impacted school districts in our press releases for any air quality events in their area. This is a task that requires extensive updates as administration at the school and district level changes yearly.

Advertising the AirAware Alerts System

Due to the nature of the AirAware Alerts, they are something that users sign up for through our website. We have been regularly advertising the AirAware Alerts, specifically through schools in the impacted area, by doing advertisements through a platform called PeachJar, which is a digital flyer channel that reaches parents and schools directly. We have also done advertisements in local papers, in a series of brochures that were recently developed and distributed to medical offices and will continue to promote through our website and social media channels. In addition, APCD will continue to distribute e-flyers through the PeachJar interface into the new school year. APCD will also be following up with a letter all Lucia Mar Unified administration in the new school year with a letter to re-introduce them to the Better Breather Alerts and ensure they are informed about the AirAware text notification program.

Follow-up System for AirAware Alert System

When the AirAware Alert System was implemented, all APCD staff were asked to subscribe to the alerts. Not only did this help facilitate immediate information to all staff, it allowed us to ensure that the text alerts were being distributed to the text list. All staff had to go through the same procedure to sign up for the alerts as the general public would. In addition, several staff have friends and family that are also signed up to receive alerts. Many of which work in public schools, hospitals, medical facilities and more. APCD Outreach staff routinely follow up with those signed up to ensure texts are being sent. If a user believes they are not getting alerts, we have provided contact information on the AirAware website to allow them a way to get in touch with us. APCD will continue to develop and refine methods of following up with the public to ensure they are informed before and during blowing dust events.

Additional ways the public can stay informed

In addition to the AirAware Alert System, the public has several other options that can help them stay informed about the air quality in their community. Currently 745 individuals are signed up and registered with Enviroflash to receive daily AQI emails for SLO County Air Quality conditions. The AQI program, which is a color-coded tool that is used nationwide, helps individuals track local air quality conditions and potential health impacts via several information sources including EnviroFlash emails, the APCD website, Twitter, and local newspapers. They can also sign up for the AirNow Enviroflash App, enter their zip code and see the current AQI for different pollutants.

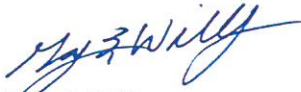
R1: The 2017-2018 Grand Jury recommends the San Luis Obispo County APCD prior to September 30, 2018 should:

- a. *Contact senior centers, hospitals and clinics, child-care facilities, and local residents who may be unaware of the District air quality alert notification and alert forecast program and encourage them to sign up to receive AirAware Alerts.*
 - b. *Perform follow-ups with residents and groups who previously signed up for the District alert notification programs and confirm whether these residents and groups are receiving alerts and forecasts.*
 - c. *Coordinate directly with the Lucia Mar Unified School District (LMUSD) and other schools on the Nipomo Mesa and nearby communities to facilitate sending them AirAware Alerts and warnings.*
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- a. In May of this year, the SLO County APCD in collaboration with the County of SLO Public Health Department re-issued their Air Quality and Your Health Campaign that was originally launched in 2012. This education program aims to heighten awareness on the connection between air pollution and human health. The series of informative brochures, banners, and public service announcements were updated to reflect current air quality conditions and include important topics such as blowing dust and smoke from wildfires. This educational campaign targets local doctors' offices, medical facilities and local residents. The APCD will also be expanding the reach to now include senior centers, child-care facilities, schools and the Spanish speaking community. All of these brochures include information about the AirAware Alerts as well as information about how the public can protect their health during significant air quality events.
 - b. Staff will continue to follow up with residents to ensure they are receiving alerts. However, APCD considers the privacy of those that sign up to be of utmost importance. We will be mindful of using personal numbers for follow up and will continue to only conduct follow ups with those that we personally know have subscribed to the program.
 - c. Since 2011, APCD staff have been conducting ongoing outreach to Lucia Mar schools that are impacted by the blowing dust events. APCD staff have had meetings with principals and school staff to describe the dust impacts and suggest ways that students and staff can protect their health. An email is sent to principals and staff of impacted schools whenever a blowing dust press release is issued, to provide direct email notification of a blowing dust event that is occurring or is forecasted. Earlier this year, APCD staff as well as the Public Health Officer had a meeting with the Superintendent of Lucia Mar School District. We also plan on meeting with staff again, following the release of this report, to discuss a

collaborative approach to ensuring parents, teachers, staff and students are informed during significant air quality events. APCD staff also will be looking into the feasibility of mailers to the communities that may be impacted by blowing dust events, to ensure they are also adequately informed.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond and comment on the Grand Jury Report. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at (805) 781-5912.

Sincerely,



Gary E. Willey
Air Pollution Control Officer

GEW/mdf/arr

cc: ✓ San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury
PO Box 490
San Luis Obispo, CA 93403

SLO County APCD Board Members