

Congresswoman seeks fast report on Compton pollution

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before I went to UCLA for five years. I didn't have any trouble over there."

Sanchez became involved in environmental issues since last year when she learned in graduate school that her hometown, Wilmington, is "ground zero for pollution."

"I cried," she said. "Nobody there really knows about it."

The testing, which is now set to begin in a few weeks, could take several months to determine whether emissions are higher than normal and to identify their source.

Sam Atwood, a spokesman for the AQMD, said the district could detect within days or weeks if there are emissions at the levels equivalent to those from Anaplex and Aerocraft; however, if the chemical is present, but at lower levels, the process could take longer.

The air monitoring process consists of placing at least two portable monitors at each facility, one on an upwind side and the other downwind. The district will collect a sample every



Rep. Nanette Barragan conducted the town hall meeting in Compton on air pollutants, saying 'If I was a parent, I'd want to make an informed decision whether to allow my kids to go out and play.'

Photo by Anne Artley

three days, over a 24-hour period. In Paramount, the total cost of the inspection was upwards of \$700,000.

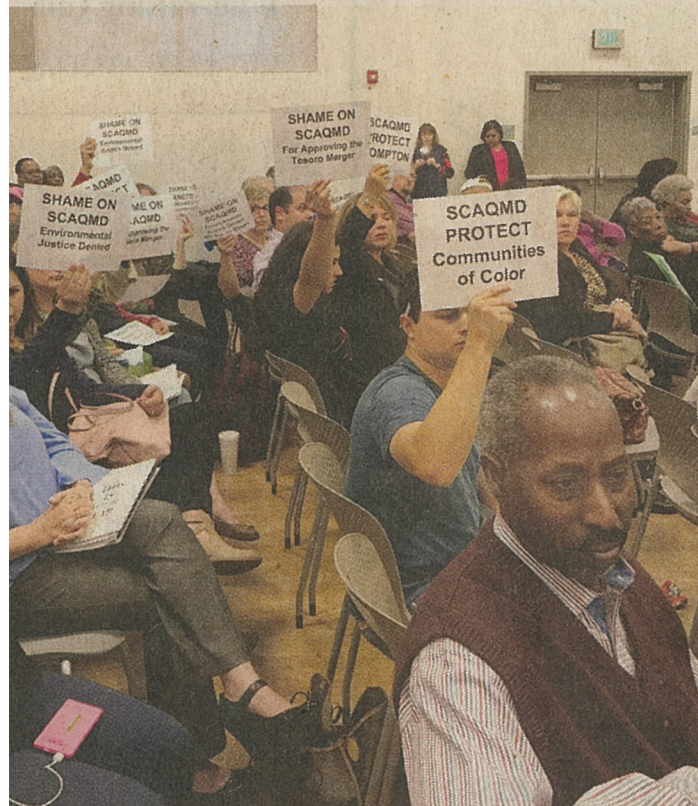
If results show that any facilities pose a significant risk to the community, AQMD will seek administrative orders from the independent AQMD

Hearing Board, as it did in Paramount. It does not have the authority to close the plants permanently.

Barragan rallied the community to keep raising awareness for the issue and hold elected officials accountable in case legal recourse is necessary.

"No matter where you live, no matter what color your skin is or your income, air pollution is going to harm you," she said. "If we have people who are afraid to come out of their homes, it will affect our economy, which affects us all."

seeks quick report on Compton pollution



People attending a town hall meeting at the Dollarhide Community Center in Compton May 15 hold up signs complaining about the time the South Coast Air Quality Management District took to discover carcinogens in the air near manufacturing plants in nearby Paramount. The AQMD is beginning similar studies in Compton and Lynwood.

Photo by Anne Artley

Residents of Paramount began complaining of a metallic odor in the air there in 2013. It took the AQMD three years to determine that hexavalent chromium and nickel, both known carcinogens, were found in the atmosphere in Paramount at levels up to 350 times higher than the allowable amount.

Barragan said she wants to make sure the same inspection does not take so long in her district.

She told a packed audience that she is urging the federal Environmental Protection Agency to provide the AQMD with the necessary resources to determine whether hexavalent chromium is also present at toxic levels in Compton and Lynwood.

Barragan has also reached out to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to assess any potential health impacts to residents of Compton and nearby communities if any toxins are identified.

Like Paramount, Compton is home to a concentration of metal-processing facilities, which are known to emit the substance. The plants are also in close proximity to each other and schools, homes, hospitals and senior centers.

"I live in Compton and I think the air quality is bad," said Helen Hamilton, a retired teacher who attended the town hall meeting. "I've lived here for almost 18 years. I've always had allergies, but this has been the worst year. I talked to my doctor, and he said it's a bad year for allergies."

In Paramount, the testing found that hexavalent chromium was primarily coming from Anaplex, a metal-processing company, and Aerocraft, a heat-treating firm for aircraft manufacture and maintenance. Both companies serve the aviation industry.

Hexavalent chromium can cause lung cancer when inhaled over long periods of time, typically years to decades.

The compound is used as pigments in dyes, paints, inks and plastics. It is also added to paints, primers and other surface coatings as an anticorrosive agent.

Hexavalent chromium gained infamy in the 2000 film "Erin Brokovich" as a pollutant in the water of Hinkley, Calif.

"A lot of people have died of cancer in Wilmington," said Magali Sanchez, an activist who attended the meeting. "My mom has a chronic cough and I did too

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