



The Air Quality Management District in Paramount

- I want to address some things tonight about the issues going on with the AQMD and the air quality readings in town.
- But first I want to strongly express that this concerns and affects ALL of us.
- This is not us versus them. We all live here, many of us for many, many years. The health, safety and well-being of everyone in town is our top priority.
- It is extremely important that we all understand the information we are receiving from the AQMD.
- We need to learn things as soon as the AQMD learns them and it needs to be presented in a way that everyone can understand.
- Along those lines, I want everyone to know that we are looking to form some kind of committee that will bring everyone together.
- We want everyone reading from the same page in order to follow what AQMD is doing, and to get all the correct information out to our residents.
- You know, Paramount was not a planned community like Lakewood or Cerritos. As things started changing from agriculture and dairies many decades ago, a lot of industry came in.
- A lot of this happened before we were a city. The county pretty much had an open door policy for development.
- This is why we have industry next to homes. It's like this in a lot of Southeast LA County. We deal with these challenges every day.
- It's important to know what a city can and can't do by law.
- We don't write air quality or soil pollution laws.
- We are not the enforcement agency for these laws. We are unable to issue permits or levy fines.

- The AQMD and state agencies do all of those things, and we have trusted them to protect us.
- In the same way you trust the FDA when buying your groceries or the County Health Dept. when eating at restaurants.
- Maybe we put too much trust in them because they don't seem to be very good at communicating with the cities they're supposed to be protecting.
- Here's one thing we will be doing. We are working with our City Attorney's office to see if we can temporarily halt any new metal companies from opening in the City until the AQMD can get things under control.
- Now let me share with you the latest activity in town.
- The AQMD has had air-quality monitors in some of our industrial areas for a few years.
- Recently they asked about putting more in and we helped get them up as fast as possible. Normally this would require permits, BUT WE WAIVED THEM.
- We helped them get permission from Southern California Edison to install the monitors on utility poles. And believe me, Edison is not always easy to work with.
- We also offered to put the monitors on City-owned stop signs and street signs.
- One of the monitors found the elevated levels of hexavalent chromium. According to the AQMD, one source has been located and they are looking for additional sources in this part of town.
- Unfortunately, before the AQMD let us know about any of this, they sent out a press release.
- And at the town hall meeting last week, their staff gave an extremely technical presentation that, at least for me, was hard to understand.
- I don't think most of the questions that residents asked got very good answers, either.
- Also, here's what they didn't say at the meeting but what an AQMD official told the Press Telegram newspaper.
- Hexavalent chromium is not easily carried by the wind and the sample they found did not pose any immediate danger to residents.

- The AQMD found one resident living in the area where the levels were present.
- I point these things out not to deny any real threats, but that AQMD needs to be clear and forthright in their communications with us, and not frighten our residents.
- They're saying the area of the readings is around Jefferson, Texaco, Illinois and Monroe streets. They don't know who is causing it yet, and their investigation is ongoing. And we are going to put pressure on them to get it figured out quickly.
- I want to also say something about the State taking soil samples in town. Some people have been saying the City wouldn't allow the samples to be taken. This is NOT true.
- They did take samples in 2014 from a number of parkways and tree wells around town including a parkway across from Village Skate Park. The sample from this parkway came back at safe levels
- Then the State wanted to take samples from the park itself. Our City Attorney wrote them a letter saying we would like to cooperate but we'd first like to see a plan.
- We never heard back. We figured if this was of immediate concern they would have had the decency to get back to us.
- I'm telling you all of this to stress that we're concerned and will work with anybody to find answers but we need to be communicating in an honest, open way.
- To get there, this is what we're doing.
- To completely understand and stay on top of the monitoring results, we proactively hired a consultant who specializes in these things. We did this months ago.
- As I mentioned, we're looking at a temporary halt to new metal companies in town.
- We've already put our business license data and City Code Enforcement officers at the disposal of AQMD.
- We're trying to get AQMD to share more information with us and with you.
- This would include frequent briefings and holding more public meetings. And asking them to make the information more understandable.

- We have written to the Board of Directors of AQMD asking them to please get their staff members to work with us better.
- We want them to collect more data and facts and make sure it's all tested properly.
- And we're going to form the committee I mentioned, and very soon.
- Let me close with this. We're glad that AQMD is in town.
- We support everything they're doing and we will continue to provide all the help we can.
- We're committed to getting every bit of information out to the community, as well as finding the source of these levels.
- And we agree that it needs to move fast and cover as wide an area as necessary.
- This is personal for us.
- Everyone on this dais has lived here for most of their lives.
- We've raised our families here, sent our children and grandchildren to school in Paramount.
- And we're committed to making things better in this regard.
- Thank you for listening.

(Presentation given by Mayor Daryl Hofmeyer, Paramount City Council meeting, November 15, 2016.)