

M O T I O N

The efficient operation of the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant is essential to the quality of life for neighbors in Los Angeles, who rely on the plant to treat raw sewage, as well as the quality of our environment and the safety of the Santa Monica Bay.

On July 11, 2021 a stretch of beaches near Playa del Rey had to be temporarily closed after roughly 17 million gallons of unfiltered sewage was discharged into the Santa Monica Bay from the Hyperion Water Reclamation plant. Staff at the plant, which is operated by the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation, have reported that the plant "became inundated with overwhelming quantities of debris" which caused a backup in the facility, forcing the plant's relief system to be triggered.

The fallout of the July 11 incident continues to this day, and though water quality sampling and testing of shoreline samples conducted in the days following the incident discovered no elevated risk to people swimming in the ocean, nearby residents in both Los Angeles and our neighboring City of El Segundo are reportedly being inconvenienced by fumes and odors causing rashes, nausea and burning eyes that are a byproduct of unutilized digester gas emitting from plant equipment during reconstruction. The release of gas during repair work has been permitted by AQMD, but questions remain about the health impacts of these fumes and odors. On July 22, LASAN announced that it would reimburse nearby residents for air conditioners if they stay in their homes, or hotel vouchers if they would rather leave to mitigate the inconvenience.

Concerningly, an initial report conducted by the County of Los Angeles's Chief Executive Officer issued on July 20 found that "the handling of this release and the necessary public notification were failures." Though unforeseen emergencies are inevitable, inadequate notification during emergencies is inexcusable. The public must be notified immediately and effectively during crises like occurred on July 11 at the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant.

Throughout the 2021 incident, the efforts of LASAN staff at Hyperion averted a much larger catastrophe and limited the discharge of untreated wastewater to a small fraction of the 260 million gallons per day that could have polluted Santa Monica Bay for days on end. In fact, numerous improvements in recent years, made in partnership with several environmental groups, helped to mitigate the flow of untreated sewage into the ocean, including reconfiguration of in-plant storm basins to pump sewage back into the plant in cases of emergency; installation of screens on all catch basins to prevent untreated wastewater from being released into Santa Monica Bay.

Though the severity of the crisis was mitigated, a detailed, thorough report is essential to assure the public that there are continued risks to the environment or to public health, and to make sure all necessary safeguards are instituted to prevent a similar incident in the future.

JUL 28 2021

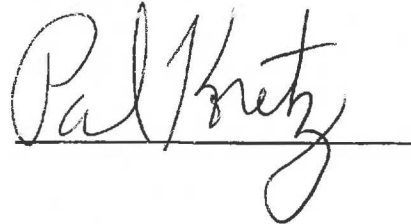
I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Sanitation be requested to report to the City Council at its earliest convenience. The report should include specific discussion of the following:

1. The cause of the July 11 incident, and what can be done to prevent a similar situation from happening again.
2. The current status of repair work at the plant and when repairs are expected to be completed.
3. The health and environmental impacts of the discharge, and necessary steps taken or yet required to mitigate them, including detailed information of which environmental and public health agencies are or have been consulted.
4. The impacts on human health and the local environment of the fumes and odors emitting from Hyperion during repairs, necessary steps taken or yet required to mitigate them, including detailed information of which environmental and public health agencies are or have been consulted.
5. What public notifications were issued during the crisis, and what LASAN is doing to improve its notification system.

PRESENTED BY:


MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District

SECONDED BY:



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