

Seismic Pounding Seeks Oil Deposits Under City

Jonathan Van Dyke, Long Beach Grunion Gazette, 6-23-10

A manmade vibration of the earth may lead to a better understanding of what lies below Signal Hill and east Long Beach.

Residents in the neighborhood may feel some reverberations as several large trucks roll through for the Long Beach/Signal Hill Geophysical Survey in the next weeks. The process by Signal Hill Petroleum Inc.'s Nodal Seismic, started on Tuesday, and will take place throughout the east Long Beach region until shortly after July 7.

Several years ago, the process had started, but residents and scientists were taken off guard, said Diane Ripley, communications expert for Nodal Seismic.

“There were a couple of mistakes, so they pulled back, learned more, and now we’re out again,” she said.

This time around, officials are making sure to keep an open dialogue with residents. Fourth District Councilman Patrick O’Donnell’s office also has been involved.

“We’ve been working closely with the company and closely with the community,” O’Donnell said. “We knew we had to be proactive rather than reactive.”

Experts are hopeful to gain insight into what is below the surface of the area.

“We’re looking at faultlines and we’re looking for oil,” Ripley said.

Nodal Seismic is using specialized “vibro-seis” trucks. These trucks will transfer acoustical energy into the ground that creates acoustic reflections. Nodes, or receivers, will be placed up and down the street in order to record those reflections.

“It comes back to us in either 2D or 3D mapping,” Ripley said. “It’s really cool.”

Experts hope to find more petroleum resources through the mapping, as well as diagram potential earthquake faultlines. The results will be shared with the academic, scientific and government communities.

“It’s significant for two reasons: For the potential revenues from oil extraction and so our city, state and federal governments can be more educated about where the faultlines lie,” O’Donnell said.

Trucks should be lined up at each testing site for about 10-12 minutes. During that time, there will be about 12 different vibration cycles. If residents notice something unusual, or if the vibrations are too great, they are encouraged to notify the crews out on the street, Ripley said.

“I have a crew that walks house to house, and then the day of, I’m out on the streets with the trucks,” she said. “If there’s an area where we feel that the vibration is too much, we stop and move.”

Areas that are included:

- June 22, expected duration is four days, Redondo Avenue from Spring Street to Ocean Boulevard.
- June 28, expected duration is four days, Los Coyotes Diagonal from Outer Traffic Circle to Carson Street.
- July 2, expected duration is two days, Atherton Street from Outer Traffic Circle to Carson Street.
- July 7, expected duration is two days, Pacific Coast Highway from Outer Traffic Circle to Judson Avenue.