

Controversial urban oil field voluntarily agrees to halt operations

Allenco Energy Co. will suspend operations at a South L.A. oil field pending completion of investigations into health complaints.

By Sarah Lyall, Los Angeles Times, 11-23-13

Operations of a controversial urban oil field in South Los Angeles voluntarily agreed Friday to halt operations until the completion of investigations prompted by complaints from neighbors, who blame noxious vapors for respiratory ailments, headaches and nosebleeds.

The decision comes a few weeks after U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) urged Allenco Energy Co. to suspend operations in the University Park neighborhood, half a mile north of USC, "until the experts tell us it is safe for the most vulnerable populations."

In response to Boxer, Allenco President Peter Allen agreed and said the decision to suspend operations was intended to give you and the residents in our area a greater sense of confidence in our ability to operate responsibly and to appropriately address any concerns.

John D. Wallerstein, executive director of the South Coast Air Quality Management District, said that it "is not very often that an operator voluntarily shuts down in response to concerns expressed by the community and elected representatives — in this case, Sen. Boxer."

Allen said that Allen "had committed to make changes in equipment that was responsible for those vapors coming from the facility."

"I am quite sincere in resolving the problems and making the necessary equipment modifications," Allen said of Allen.

The site is the focus of ongoing investigations by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the city attorney's office, the county Department of Health and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which leases the 2-acre site to the company.

"I appreciate the company's decision to suspend operations," Los Angeles City Atty. Mike Feuer said. "The investigation into the company's compliance with the law continues."

trations over the air district's inability to say whether fumes from the oil field are hazardous triggering investigations aimed at determining the cause of the ailments, as well as the validity of Allenco's permits and the archdiocese's lease agreements with the company

While our operations are down, we will continue to work with the regulating agencies," Allen said. Sen. Bob Boxer. "We will continue to seek advice from the community, and we have already hired engineering and environmental consultants to help us improve our operations."

Boxer applauded the company's decision

A great victory for a community that has been living and suffering in the air plume of Allenco's emissions. H. Ibrahim, executive director of Esperanza Community Housing Corp., a nonprofit affordable housing developer in the area bounded by the 110 Freeway, the 10 Freeway and USC.

Francisco Uriarte, whose 12-year-old daughter is among neighborhood children suffering from frequent asthma attacks, said: "What happened today is a lesson for neighborhoods across Los Angeles. Don't give up."