

# Crews making progress in stopping gas leak near Porter Ranch

**Gregory J. Wilcox, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, 11-10-15**

Crews from Southern California Gas Co. and outside experts may stem the flow of gas leaking from a well site above Porter Ranch later this week, officials said Monday.

“They are certainly hoping to do it sooner rather than later,” said Don Drysdale, spokesman for the state’s Division of Oil, Gas & Geothermal Resources, which has observers on site making sure all the necessary tests are carried out on the leaking pipe.

Another source who is familiar with the situation said workers are hoping to get the gas stopped this week.

The gas company declined to set out a timetable and spokesman Javier Mendoza said that safety, not speed, is the overriding concern for workers and the community.

The 2 7/8 inch pipe is inside a seven inch well casing in an 8,750 foot deep well near the top of Oat Mountain in the company’s Aliso Canyon natural gas storage facility above Porter Ranch. It has been leaking since Oct. 23 and crews have been working daily to stop the flow of gas.

Some good strides have been made in recent days.

A frozen plug of drilling fluid that had been blocking the pipe and had stymied earlier efforts to stop the leak was dissolved on Friday by a crew using a special device brought in from the Gulf Coast.

The device, called a coiled tubing rig, is basically a flexible hollow pipe that fits inside the gas pipe. That allowed a brine solution to be injected into the well and dissolve the plug.

“Current indications are that the well is clear, the tubing is intact and we have access into the storage zone at around 8,500 feet,” Mendoza said.

“Our well management experts are continuing the multi-day evaluation. After we completed the work with the coiled tubing rig, the focus Sunday was to continue evaluating the condition of the well pipe,” Mendoza said. “We will take what we learn from multiple diagnostic tests and use it to guide our next steps to safely stop the flow of gas.”

The company has been sending special probes into the well to get readings on things like temperature and pressure.

Each one of these tasks takes about a day and collectively the data will give crews a better picture of what is going on underground.

Once that is done the pipe will be filled with brine to stop the gas from escaping, Mendoza said.

Once the gas flow is stopped the company will consider its other options.

As this work proceeds, some residents might notice the rotten egg odor caused by the compound mercaptan added to natural gas, SoCal Gas Co. officials said.

The company is continuing to test air samples for gas and mercaptan levels and the results will be posted on the company's web site, Mendoza said.

Boots & Coots, the well containment arm of Houston-based energy product and services provider Halliburton, has been assisting the gas company in its efforts.

County officials have also been on site.

"All of our county agencies are involved in ongoing (monitoring) with the gas company to make sure this gets resolved as soon as possible," said Tony Bell, Assistant Chief Deputy to Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich.