

WATSON COGENERATION STEAM AND ELECTRIC RELIABILITY PROJECT (09-AFC-01)

PUBLIC HEALTH Response to Public Comments Alvin Greenberg, Ph.D.

DOCKET
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DATE <u>OCT 14 2011</u>
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Public Comment

Subsequent to the release of the FSA, members of the public expressed a concern about asthma rates in the project vicinity and asked if the FSA addressed this issue.

Response

Staff has identified the current incidence of respiratory disease in the project vicinity of Carson, Los Angeles County and found that when compared to the prevalence of respiratory disease found in populations located in other parts of Los Angeles County and in the State of California, it is similar. Furthermore, in comparison to other sources, gas-fired power plants in California produce limited amounts of pollutants capable of causing or exacerbating asthma. Given the emissions controls and offsets for PM_{2.5}/10, NO_x, SO₂, and CO required to permit such facilities, gas-fired power plants in California do not create any significant unmitigated direct or indirect adverse air quality impacts. Therefore, staff believes that the available scientific evidence supports a finding that any incremental impact on asthma rates from the Watson Project would not be significant.

Discussion

Los Angeles County is divided into eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs). The City of Carson (and thus the Watson Project) is located in SPA 8, South Bay, which is the southernmost SPA in the County. SPAs 6 and 7 (South and East, respectively) are located to the north and northeast of SPA 8 (see Figure 1). The incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases in Los Angeles County are measured using results of the most recently available California and Los Angeles health surveys and other data sources. Health surveys report asthma prevalence and asthma hospitalization rates and emergency department visits, among many other parameters. Approximately 13.7 percent of adults and 8.6 percent of children in the State of California have been diagnosed with asthma (Milet 2007).

1. Demographics of Los Angeles County and SPAs 6, 7 & 8

The LA County Public Health Department (lacounty.gov) reports population characteristics with regards to racial/ethnic makeup of Los Angeles County and of the SPAs (6, 7 and 8 shown here), in percentage:

	Los Angeles County Year 2000	SPA 6 South Year 2000	SPA 7 East Year 2006	SPA 8 South Bay Year 2000
White	33%	3%	19%	37%
African American	9%	36%	3%	13%
American Indian	1%	<1%	0.3%	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	12%	2%	8%	16%
Latino	45%	59%	68%	33%

2. Asthma Mortality Data

California Breathing, a division of the Environmental Health Investigations Branch of the California Department of Public Health, reported asthma mortality statistics for 2006-2008 in county asthma profiles posted online (<http://www.californiabreathing.org/asthma-data/county-asthma-profiles>). Age-adjusted asthma mortality rates are shown below:

Age	Age-adjusted asthma mortality rate (in deaths per million)	
	Los Angeles County	State of California
0-17 years old	n/a	2.0
18+ years old	15.4	15.6
All ages	11.9	12.1

CDHS reports age-adjusted asthma deaths for counties in California based on 2000-2004 aggregate data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). For all counties in California the asthma death rate is 15.5 per million and 14.5 per million for Los Angeles County (Milet 2007).

Asthma mortality data can also be compared to the Healthy People 2010 and 2020 target levels published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health. The Healthy People 2010 target for asthma deaths is 6.0 per million in ages 35-64 and 22.9 per million for ages 65 and older. The Healthy People 2020 targets are 8 and 47 per million, respectively.

3. Asthma Prevalence

Data on lifetime asthma prevalence in California residents were collected in the 2009 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) and are available on-line at californiabreathing.org/asthma-data/county-asthma-profiles/los-angeles-county-asthma-profile. Pertinent data collected on lifetime asthma prevalence are summarized below:

Lifetime Asthma Prevalence by Age (2009):

	LA County	California
Children (0-4 yrs)	7.8%	7.7%
Children (ages 5-17)	15.5%	16.2%
Adults (ages 18-64)	12.2%	13.8%
Adults (> 65 yrs)	11.2%	11.8%
All Ages	12.5%	13.7%

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health published “Key Indicators of Health by Service Plan Area (LACDPH 2009) and presented the following data for prevalence of asthma in children ages 0-17:

Asthma Prevalence in Children, ages 0-17 (LACDPH 2009):

	Los Angeles County	SPA 6 South	SPA 7 East	SPA 8 South Bay
2002 – 2003	8.1%	6.0%	7.7%	8.8%
2005	8.8%	9.0%	8.8%	11.0%
2007	7.9%	7.8%	8.8%	9.5%

LA Health Data Now! Is an online system that allows the user to query datasets of the Los Angeles County Health Survey for information on diseases and provides summaries of disease trends (<http://dqs.hasten.ladhs.org/default.aspx>). The following information was obtained by querying the dataset:

Percent of adults (>18 years old) with current asthma:

	2005	2002-03
Los Angeles County	6.5%	6.1%
SPA 6 (South)	7.2%	7.0%
SPA 7 (East)	5.1%	6.5%
SPA 8 (South Bay)	6.7%	6.7%

Percent of children (0-17 years old) with current asthma:

	2007	2005	2002-03
Los Angeles County	7.9%	8.8%	8.1%
SPA 6 (South)	7.8%	9.0%	6.0%
SPA 7 (East)	8.8%	8.8%	7.7%
SPA 8 (South Bay)	9.5%	11.0%	8.8%

Information was obtained from *LA Health Data Now!* regarding rates of current asthma in adults and children based on race/ethnicity:

Percent of adults (>18 years old) with current asthma:

	2005	2002-03
Latino	4.8%	4.4%
White	8.1%	7.7%
African-American	10.4%	10.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.6%	4.6%

Percent of children (0-17 years old) with current asthma:

	2007	2005	2002-03
Latino	6.4%	7.3%	6.5%
White	8.1%	8.4%	9.1%
African-American	18.4%	18.5%	15.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6.7%	7.9%	8.8%

Liu (2010) reports that based on data obtained during the 2007 CHIS, the statewide prevalence of active asthma is 8.1 percent in adults and 10.4 percent in children. In Los Angeles County the rates are 6.8 percent in adults and 10.9 percent in children while in SPA 8 (South Bay), the values are 8.1 percent and 12.4 percent, respectively.

Milet (2007) reports lifetime asthma prevalence to be 12.4% for all counties in California compared to 11.3 percent for Los Angeles County (based on 2001-2003 data reported by CHIS).

4. Asthma Hospitalization and Emergency Department Visit Data

Asthma hospitalization data provide information on patients with asthma so severe that they are admitted to the hospital for treatment. These data do not provide information on asthma incidence in the population or on how many people visit private doctors, emergency rooms or outpatient clinics for asthma, or on the mortality rate of asthma.

Age-adjusted asthma hospitalization rates are reported by CDHS in the California County Chart Book for asthma hospitalization rates in California and Los Angeles County for 1998 to 2000 (Stockman 2003). Age-adjusted asthma hospitalization rates by race/ethnicity for all ages and for children (ages 0-14) are presented below (annual rates per 10,000):

	Total	non-Hispanic White	African- American	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander
All Ages:					
California	11.1	9.5	33.0	10.3	7.8
LA County	12.5	10.5	32.9	11.5	7.6
Children (ages 0-14):					
California	18.1	14.9	57.6	14.9	9.7
LA County	19.4	16.6	57.9	15.1	9.9

The Asthma Coalition of Los Angeles County (ACLAC) reported asthma hospitalizations and Emergency Department visits by Los Angeles County Service Planning Areas (Scully 2010). 2006-2008 aggregate data were reported (annual rates per 10,000):

SPA	Asthma Hospitalizations (0-17 yrs old)	Asthma Emergency Dept Visits
1 – Antelope Valley	18	58.4
2 – San Fernando	7.8	35.6
3 – San Gabriel	13	35
4 – Metro	8	41.1
5 – West	6.2	26.1
6 – South	17.3	79.4
7 – East	9.9	43.7
8 – South Bay	10.9	46.4

Trends in hospitalizations for adult asthma are reported over a 10-year period, 1999 – 2008 for SPAs, LA County and California (discharges per 100,000 adults; OSHPD 2010):

	State of California	Los Angeles County	SPA 6 South	SPA 7 East	SPA 8 South Bay
1999	96.1	110.2	212.7	108.4	121.8
2000	80.9	92.8	178.1	99.5	98.2
2001	83.5	101.4	201.0	121.7	111.2
2002	82.3	100.3	177.7	107.8	107.5
2003	93.5	113.6	222.4	128.7	116.6
2004	80.6	98.0	193.4	105.4	92.6
2005	89.5	113.4	243.0	125.3	107.2
2006	79.8	98.2	211.4	108.5	86.5
2007	77.0	94.3	196.9	110.1	83.9
2008	84.5	103.9	224.4	131.5	90.6

Data on lifetime asthma hospitalizations and Emergency Department visits in California residents were collected in the 2009 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) and are available on-line at californiabreathing.org/asthma-data/county-asthma-profiles/los-angeles-county-asthma-profile. Pertinent data are summarized below for hospitalization rates, emergency department visits and by race/ethnicity:

Asthma Hospitalization data for LA County and California in 2008 compared to Healthy People 2010 and 2020 targets (age-adjusted rate per 10,000 residents):

	LA County	California	HP 2010	HP 2020
0-4 yrs old	21.2	22	25	18.1
5-64 years old	6.9	6.0	7.7	11.1
65+ years old	29.9	21.9	11	20.3

Asthma Emergency Department Visits for LA County and California and compared to Healthy People 2010 targets (in 2008, age-adjusted rate per 10,000 residents):

	LA County	California	HP 2010	HP 2020
0-4 yrs old	101.2	102.5	80	95.5
5-64 years old	39.8	39.8	50	49.1
65+ years old	41.2	37.7	15	13.2

Age-adjusted asthma hospitalizations and emergency department visits by Race/Ethnicity (in 2008; per 10,000 LA County residents):

	Hospitalizations	ED Visits
White	8.7	33.9
African-American	28.3	132.9
Hispanic	11	29.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.6	13.9

Trends in hospitalizations for children with asthma are also reported over a 10-year period, 1999 – 2008 for LA County and California (discharges per 100,000; data not available for SPAs) (OSHPD 2010):

	State of California	Los Angeles County
1999	126.9	124.6
2000	131	131.8
2001	109.6	107.9
2002	117.7	121.1
2003	113.3	103.9
2004	98.2	93.8
2005	90.1	89.1
2006	87.3	85
2007	78.5	74.1
2008	77.6	70.2

Milet (2007) reports age-adjusted asthma hospitalization rates. For all counties in California, based on 2000-2005 aggregate data, the asthma hospitalization rate is reported to be 10.5 per 10,000 residents while the rate for Los Angeles County is 12.3 per 10,000 residents. The age-adjusted asthma emergency department visit rate is 39.1 per 10,000 residents for all counties in California and 38.5 per 10,000 residents for Los Angeles County.

5. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or COPD is a term to describe a group of lung diseases that includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. COPD is characterized by air flow obstruction in the lungs that interferes with normal breathing. 82 percent of deaths due to COPD are caused by cigarette smoking (DHS 1998). According to the American Lung Association, COPD is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States with an age-adjusted death rate of 42.2 deaths per 100,000 population in 2001. COPD is the only lung disease with a higher age-adjusted death rate in Whites than in African-Americans (ALA 2004). The Healthy People 2010 target rate for COPD hospitalizations is 50.1 per 10,000 and 55.2 per 10,000 for COPD emergency department visits.

Trends in hospitalizations for adult chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are reported over a 10-year period, 1999 – 2008 for SPAs, LA County and California (discharges per 100,000 adults; OSHPD 2010):

	State of California	Los Angeles County	SPA 6 South	SPA 7 East	SPA 8 South Bay
1999	210.3	241.2	374.8	283.8	249.2
2000	188.1	214.7	344.7	255.6	216.8
2001	177.9	206.4	335.5	252.4	192.6
2002	169.0	194.1	317.0	233.2	177.3
2003	160.5	184.5	300.8	218.9	160.3
2004	133.0	149.4	254.9	154.0	148.1
2005	120.4	137.9	257.1	130.4	133.5
2006	108.4	115.9	216.9	113.3	113.4
2007	109.9	116.4	224.0	110.8	113.6
2008	127.8	131.6	261.2	127.6	124.0

The asthma mortality rate in Los Angeles County is similar to the rate reported for the State of California. Likewise, asthma prevalence for all ages in LA County is similar to the prevalence observed in California and in Service Planning Areas (SPAs) 6, 7 and 8 (South, East and South Bay).

Asthma hospitalization rates for children in Los Angeles County are less than the asthma target rates recommended by the Healthy People 2010 objectives, but higher than the rates recommended by Healthy People 2020. Pediatric emergency department visit rates exceed the HP 2010 and HP 2020 target rates, as do the rates for the elderly.

Within the County of Los Angeles, SPA 6 (South) has somewhat higher hospitalizations and emergency department visit rates in children compared to SPA 7 (East) and SPA 8 (South Bay). Over the 10-year period of 1999-2008, hospitalization rates for adults with asthma in California, Los Angeles County and SPA 8 and declined while the rate in SPAs 6 and 7 has increased. For childhood

asthma, the hospitalization rate has decreased over that time period in California and Los Angeles County.

Review of asthma hospitalization rates in Los Angeles County by race/ethnicity shows that the hospitalization rate for African-Americans is approximately 3 times greater than the rate for Whites and approximately 2.6 times greater than the rate for Hispanics. Similarly, the emergency department visit rate for African-Americans is approximately 4 times greater than the rate for Whites and about 4.4 times greater than the rate for Hispanics.

Over the 10-year period of 1999-2008, hospitalization rates for adults with COPD in California, Los Angeles County and SPAs 6, 7 and 8 have declined.

Conclusion

This review has shown that the prevalence of asthma and the rates of asthma hospitalization, asthma emergency department visits and COPD hospitalization are similar in the area of Carson, California (SPA 8) to the prevalence and rates seen in Los Angeles County and in California as a whole. In Los Angeles County, the rates of asthma hospitalization and emergency department visits are 3-4 times higher for African-Americans than Whites and Hispanics.

There is not one single cause of asthma. Studies attempting to identify specific environmental exposures associated with the development of asthma have not produced a unifying theory to explain the asthma epidemic. It is well documented that outdoor environmental exposures to criteria pollutants such as ozone, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides exacerbate asthma and ozone can also cause asthma. It is interesting to note that at a gross level, air pollution levels in Southern California and in the United States are substantially lower than they were in the past, yet asthma prevalence has risen substantially over the past 20 years.

Despite the fact that the United States and California are experiencing an increase in asthma incidence rates of epidemic proportions (U.S. EPA 2003; Kreutzer 1998), it is extremely difficult to ascribe either causation or exacerbation to emissions from a gas power plant. Data is lacking because the examination of existing background asthma incident rates at a location pre-power plant construction is fraught with scientific uncertainty and many confounding variable such as the well-documented impacts from mobile sources. Certain air pollutants are a cause of asthma and others exacerbate asthma, but how many cases are caused or exacerbated by air pollution and at what levels of pollution is not known. Data specific to asthma rates for specific neighborhoods is non-existent and that for cities and counties limited. Even when data is available, different data-bases lead to results portraying different locations as having the "highest" rates of asthma. For example, one report from UCLA shows Solano County as having the highest childhood asthma rate in the state. To confound matters, the UCLA report has certain limitations, including self-

reporting of asthma in adults and children and a very low response rate for Solano County which could result in a skewed level of asthma found.

The California Department of Public Health compiled data on hospital admissions due to physician-diagnosed asthma which ranked Solano County near the middle of all counties, below the state average and below the Health People 2000 goal for children and minorities (California Department of Health Services, Environmental Health Investigations Branch, 2000). This report, however, also has certain limitations. While all asthma cases were physician-diagnosed, only hospital admissions – thus indicating only severe cases of asthma - were included. Since the goal of preventative medicine is to avoid hospitalization, many asthma cases go unreported to physicians, and many of those that are reported do not result in hospital admissions, this study may only examine a small sub-set of the actual number of asthma cases in California or a specific county.

In comparison to other sources, gas-fired power plants in California produce limited amounts of pollutants capable of causing or exacerbating asthma. Given the emissions controls and offsets for PM_{2.5}/10, NO_x, SO₂, and CO required to permit such facilities, gas-fired power plants in California do not create any significant unmitigated direct or indirect adverse air quality impacts. Therefore, staff believes that the available scientific evidence supports a finding that any incremental impact on asthma rates would not be significant.

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Figure 1. Map of Los Angeles County Service Planning Areas.



Source: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/spa/spamap.htm>



**BEFORE THE ENERGY RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
1516 NINTH STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
1-800-822-6228 – WWW.ENERGY.CA.GOV**

**APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION
FOR THE *WATSON COGENERATION STEAM
AND ELECTRICITY RELIABILITY PROJECT***

DOCKET NO. 09-AFC-1
PROOF OF SERVICE LIST
(Revised 8/15/11)

APPLICANT

Ross Metersky
BP Products North America, Inc.
700 Louisiana Street, 12th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002
ross.metersky@bp.com

APPLICANT'S CONSULTANTS

URS Corporation
Cynthia H. Kyle-Fischer
8181 East Tufts Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80237
cindy_kyle-fischer@urscorp.com

COUNSEL FOR APPLICANT

Chris Ellison
Ellison Schneider and Harris LLP
2600 Capitol Avenue, Suite 400
Sacramento, CA 95816
cte@eslawfirm.com

INTERESTED AGENCIES

California ISO
e-recipient@caiso.com

INTERVENORS

California Unions for Reliable Energy
(CURE)
c/o: Tanya A. Gulesserian
Marc D. Joseph
Adams Broadwell Joseph & Cardozo
601 Gateway Boulevard, Suite 1000
South San Francisco, CA 94080
tgulesserian@adamsbroadwell.com

**ENERGY COMMISSION –
DECISIONMAKERS**

CARLA PETERMAN
Commissioner and Presiding Member
cpeterma@energy.state.ca.us

Jim Bartridge
Adviser to Commissioner Peterman
jbartrid@energy.state.ca.us

KAREN DOUGLAS
Commissioner and Associate Member
kldougla@energy.state.ca.us

Galen Lemei
Adviser to Commissioner Douglas
glemei@energy.state.ca.us

Raoul Renaud
Hearing Officer
rrenaud@energy.state.ca.us

ENERGY COMMISSION STAFF

Alan Solomon
Project Manager
asolomon@energy.state.ca.us

Christine Hammond
Staff Counsel
chammond@energy.state.ca.us

**ENERGY COMMISSION – PUBLIC
ADVISER**

Jennifer Jennings
Public Adviser's Office
e-mail service preferred
publicadviser@energy.state.ca.us

*indicates change

DECLARATION OF SERVICE

I, Maria Santourdjian, declare that on, October 14, 2011, I served and filed copies of the attached CEC Staff Response to Public comment Concerning Asthma for BP Watson Project (09-AFC-1). The original document, filed with the Docket Unit or the Chief Counsel, as required by the applicable regulation, is accompanied by a copy of the most recent Proof of Service list, located on the web page for this project at: [www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/watson/index.html].

The document has been sent to the other parties in this proceeding (as shown on the Proof of Service list) and to the Commission's Docket Unit or Chief Counsel, as appropriate, in the following manner:

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- Served electronically to all e-mail addresses on the Proof of Service list;
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OR, if filing a Petition for Reconsideration of Decision or Order pursuant to Title 20, § 1720:

- Served by delivering on this date one electronic copy by e-mail, and an original paper copy to the Chief Counsel at the following address, either personally, or for mailing with the U.S. Postal Service with first class postage thereon fully prepaid:

California Energy Commission
Michael J. Levy, Chief Counsel
1516 Ninth Street MS-14
Sacramento, CA 95814
mlevy@energy.state.ca.us

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct, that I am employed in the county where this mailing occurred, and that I am over the age of 18 years and not a party to the proceeding.

Originally Signed by
Maria Santourdjian