Office of the City Manager

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Christine Daniel, City Manager

Submitted by: Jane Micallef, Director, Health, Housing & Community Services
                    Department
               Eric Angstadt, Director, Department of Planning & Development
               Gil Dong, Fire Chief

Subject: Chevron Refinery Fire Follow-Up: Emergency Public Information and Warning

RECOMMENDATION
Request the City Manager to direct the City's existing Emergency Public Information
and Warning Steering Committee to:
1) Coordinate with the Alameda County Operational Area to optimize information-
    sharing during emergency events.
2) Coordinate with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) to
    clarify the District's roles and responsibilities for monitoring air quality and
    sharing information during emergency events.
3) Further develop community outreach about the capabilities and limitations of the
    City's emergency public information and warning systems, and the
    interdepartmental coordination and procedures guiding their use.

SUMMARY
At its meeting of October 30, 2012, City Council requested the Community
Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC) and the Community Health Commission
(CHC) to research the City's and BAAQMD's response to the August 6, 2012 fire at the
Chevron Refinery in Richmond. City emergency managers monitored this high-profile
event and determined that the smoke did not pose a threat to the Berkeley community.
The City used normal processes to communicate to the public about the fire, and did not
activate its emergency public information and warning systems.

Staff agrees with CHC and CEAC recommendations to convene experts to address
emergency public information capabilities and expectations in Berkeley. The City has an
existing multidisciplinary steering committee of emergency management
representatives, and the City recommends that this group work to strengthen
coordination and emergency information-sharing efforts with the Alameda County
Operational Area and the BAAQMD. Staff also recommends that the group develop
strategies to outreach to and educate the community about the capabilities and

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limitations of the City's emergency public information and warning systems, and the interdepartmental coordination and procedures guiding their use.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION
Staff time to coordinate internally and with outside agencies, and to develop documentation and outreach.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS
Berkeley emergency managers monitored the Chevron Refinery Fire and determined that the smoke from the Richmond refinery did not threaten the Berkeley community. The City issued a press release on its website and did not activate its emergency alerting systems. Some Berkeley community members wanted more timely information about local impacts of this high-profile event.

The City maintains a suite of emergency notification systems that can be activated when Berkeley community members are threatened.

BACKGROUND
Emergency Public Information and Warning Systems in General
In response to events that pose threats to the health and safety of Berkeley residents, the City uses its emergency notification systems to issue protective action instructions. The City maintains three systems to issue emergency public information and warnings to community members at risk: 1610 AM radio; the Berkeley Emergency Notification System (BENS); and first responders, who may issue messages door-to-door or through public address systems. In an emergency, the City may use all or parts of these systems in tandem with other public information capabilities. The population targeted to receive an emergency notification may be as large as the entire City, or as small as a single City intersection.

The City uses emergency public information and warning systems in accordance with the level of risk to the exposed population. In lower-risk events, the City will use less invasive elements of these systems, such as issuing messages on 1610 AM or sending emails to registered BENS users. In this way, information is available to people who seek it out or to community members who have opted in to receiving alerts. In higher-risk events, the City will use its more aggressive notification capabilities, like calling land line phones that have not been pre-registered with BENS, or using first responders to issue messages.

Chevron Refinery Fire
The August 6, 2012 Chevron Refinery Fire in Richmond created a plume of black smoke that could be seen from many parts of the Bay Area. The Contra Costa County Health Services Department issued a "shelter-in-place" order for residents in Richmond, North Richmond and San Pablo. City of Berkeley emergency managers monitored the situation and determined that the smoke did not pose a threat to the Berkeley community, and the City did not activate its emergency notification systems. The City

issued a press release on the City website clarifying that there was no shelter-in-place order for Berkeley, and recommending that people who smelled smoke stay indoors.

According to the BAAQMD, on the day of the fire, winds close to the ground were very low, allowing the smoke to rise thousands of feet into the air, where higher winds blew the smoke eastward. As a result, most of the smoke did not touch down in nearby communities, but was instead blown into the Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada. Following the event, the City's Public Health Division did not receive any reports from Berkeley emergency rooms or healthcare providers of an increase in respiratory illnesses.

Suisun City Fire
Berkeley emergency managers proactively notify community members when emergencies could impact their health and safety. As an example, on October 4, 2013, winds blew smoke from a fire near Suisun City in Solano County southwest into Berkeley and surrounding areas. City of Berkeley emergency managers continuously monitored the fire, and determined that smoke posed a threat to Berkeley community members with respiratory issues. Additionally, the BAAQMD issued a smoke advisory to Bay Area residents.

In response to this situation, the City posted an advisory on the 1610 AM radio station, and sent a Short Message Service (SMS) text message and an email to community members registered with the Berkeley Emergency Notification System (BENS). The communication advised persons sensitive to smoke or with related health issues to remain indoors until the smoke cleared. In addition to activating these emergency public information and warning systems, the City also issued a press release on the City website and staff was interviewed by local media.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION
The City Manager agrees with the CHC and CEAC recommendations to convene experts to address emergency public information capabilities and expectations in Berkeley. The City has an existing multidisciplinary steering committee of emergency management representatives who are addressing emergency public information and warning issues and systems. This workgroup's goals include further clarification of thresholds for use of emergency public information and warning systems, as well as further integration of existing and new warning systems.

This group intends to address two issues that arose from the Chevron Refinery fire, which were addressed in the Commissions' feedback to the City Council: information-sharing among response agencies, and Berkeley's procedures for use of City-run emergency public information and warning systems. Specifically, the group plans to:

1) Coordinate with the Alameda County Operational Area to optimize information-sharing during emergency events.

2) Coordinate with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) to clarify the District's roles and responsibilities for monitoring air quality and sharing information during emergency events.
3) Further develop community outreach about the capabilities and limitations of the City's emergency public information and warning systems, and the interdepartmental coordination and procedures guiding their use.

CEAC recommends that the City ensure that outside governmental agencies and chemical facilities in the region provide warnings to the City of Berkeley in hazardous materials releases. The City of Berkeley does not have authority to require surrounding jurisdictions, government agencies or private entities outside our borders to issue emergency notifications to Berkeley. However, even with that limitation, the steering committee plans to work within existing emergency management structures to optimize information-sharing with the Alameda County Operational Area and BAAQMD during emergency events.

CEAC also recommends that the City make provisions to maintain localized real-time meteorological data for use by emergency responders and on the City website. This recommendation would not increase the City's ability to respond to events impacting air quality for the following reasons. In hazardous materials events, emergency managers issue shelter-in-place or evacuation recommendations to their communities based on what is known about the possible substances released, their estimated quantities, and broad weather patterns. First responders use broad weather patterns to ensure that protective actions cover community members in the widest possible area of impact. Requisite meteorological information is already available via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; localized meteorological data sites would not change protective action recommendations.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED
None.

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