

Statement on Santa Susana Field Lab Building Demolition

For more than 25 years, the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has been the lead regulatory agency overseeing the investigation and cleanup of environmental contamination at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL), a former rocket engine test site and nuclear research facility in the Simi Hills in southeastern Ventura County.

This cleanup effort has harnessed the expertise and knowledge of DTSC staff, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). It has resulted in the successful demolition and disposal of seven of 12 buildings and structures from Area IV – a portion of the SSFL site where radiological activity historically was centered.

The safety and legality of the cleanup, however, have been called into question recently. The allegations are that DTSC allowed radioactively contaminated waste to be disposed of at landfills and other facilities not licensed to take it. And that DTSC failed to follow all laws and regulations that govern environmental cleanups.

Both allegations are false. None of the building material demolished and disposed of under DTSC's oversight from Area IV or any other portion of the SSFL site poses a risk to public health or the environment. In addition, none of the cleanup activities has occurred without required review of the environmental impacts.

Given the history of nuclear research and radiological activities in Area IV, DTSC has been cognizant of the increased possibility of radioactive contamination in these buildings and has taken great care to follow all appropriate steps to investigate and evaluate the structures for radioactivity. Multiple regulatory agencies, including US EPA, NRC and CDPH, have been responsible for clearing the former radiological buildings of Area IV for "unrestricted use," meaning materials from their demolition can safely be disposed of at various California facilities including municipal landfills and metal recycling facilities.

In addition to this multi-layered review of the potential for radiological contamination, DTSC reviews structures and buildings to determine if any hazardous chemical wastes are present that would require special handling and disposal.

None of this review triggers environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. Regardless, DTSC is confident that the demolition activities being conducted in Area IV of the SSFL conform with all federal, state and local laws.