

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Superfund Listing Concurrence for Santa Susana Field Laboratory -- Support

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

We write to urge you to concur with the recommendation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to place the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) on the National Priority List (NPL), making it a federal Superfund site. Such an action has been long sought by the affected communities nearby this badly contaminated facility.

SSFL was established in the hills above Simi Valley and the western San Fernando Valley in the late 1940s for testing rockets and nuclear reactors. Over the subsequent decades, there were numerous accidents, spills and releases. In 1959, a reactor suffered a partial meltdown, one of the only such nuclear events in the world. Other reactors at the site experienced additional accidents. Radioactive and toxic wastes were routinely burned in open pits. Tens of thousands of rocket tests were conducted. Hazardous materials were released in very large quantities; for example, half a million gallons of TCE entered the groundwater and subsurface soil at the site.

In short, SSFL is one of the most contaminated sites in the state. It is inexplicable that it has not been placed on the NPL before this. Now US EPA Region IX has finally concluded that the site qualifies for federal Superfund status and is recommending listing, and has asked for your concurrence. We strongly urge you to agree.

We supported Senate Bill 990 (Kuehl), which passed the Legislature with remarkable bipartisan support and was signed by you into law in October, and we will vigorously defend SB990 from any efforts to weaken or repeal its core provisions. SB 990 strengthens radiation cleanup standards for the site. Federal Superfund listing would add additional clout to the effort to assure the contamination is effectively remediated. For years, the U.S. Department of Energy has refused to address EPA's concerns about the inadequacy of the cleanup, and has asserted the state had limited jurisdiction, if any. With NPL listing, DOE could not declare the cleanup complete without EPA's signoff, eliminating DOE's ability to walk away from contamination if EPA disagreed. Listing will not diminish state power to get the site cleaned up but rather provide additional power to assure the site is truly cleaned up and the public and environment protected.

We urge your concurrence with the EPA NPL listing recommendation.

Bill Magavern
Senior Representative
Sierra Club California

Dan Hirsch
President
Committee to Bridge the Gap

