

Open Letter on Lehigh Quarry:

In late 2010, members of the public approached both the Los Altos and Los Altos Hills City Councils with claims of adverse health issues that stem from the Lehigh Quarry's operations. The Lehigh Quarry is a substantial operation (2,400+ acres) located in the foothills just north of Cupertino and includes both quarry and cement manufacturing operations. The complaining groups insist that the Quarry is operating in violation of EPA directives, that the County has not taken appropriate enforcement action on Notices of Violations, that the Quarry does not have a vested right to permit continued operations, and that the Quarry is the source of a variety of Toxic Air Contaminants (TACs) that affect the health of South Bay residents. On the other hand, Lehigh Quarry officials insist that it is a responsible corporate citizen of the community, is in full compliance with all emission requirements, and provides substantial benefits to the community at large, as explained in a full-page advertisement recently published in the Town Crier.

Even though the Quarry is not located within the jurisdictions our two Cities, the two Councils decided to form ad-hoc committees to review the situation from each of our community's perspective. The two ad-hoc committees have agreed to work together in a transparent, objective, and unbiased effort to determine, to the best of their ability, whether the emissions from the Quarry are (or are not) in compliance with imposed emissions requirements and whether the responsible enforcement agencies have performed their jobs. If the ad hoc committees determine that Lehigh is in compliance, then their review will be concluded. If the committees determine otherwise, then they will, at a minimum, insist that the County and the responsible Government agencies take immediate action to resolve any deficiencies.

The present plan of the committees is to proceed with four primary actions:

1. Gather information relative to the Quarry and make that information readily accessible on a public website repository (www.SouthBayQuarryLibrary.org) so that all parties can access, review and download the information. Considerable information already exists on various websites, but the intent here is to collect and place all of it on one site to be kept current. In addition, formal requests for information will be presented to each of the enforcement agencies so that a complete picture is available. No 'BBS' or 'forum' capability will be provided since the Library is to be unbiased and objective. The web site provides email access to the Librarian; it will accept emailed information, reports, files and ideas for inclusion in the repository, if appropriate. If you have applicable information or special skills, please let us know as provided on the website's email link.
2. Engage the services of an independent expert to render an opinion based on all available evidence.
3. Take steps to install dedicated air monitoring equipment in our jurisdictions to verify that any measured contaminants in our community's are consistent with the various legal requirements. One air monitoring station is now located in Cupertino, however, it's relevance for our communities is questionable due to the varying wind dispersal patterns that occur. Qualified, independent analytical expertise is also being sought to assist in this effort.

4. Work with the Regional Water Quality Control Board to change the sampling point of the water that passes through our environment as it flows to the Bay (downstream from the existing test location).

We will attempt to keep the public informed as the review progresses.

Los Altos City Council Ad Hoc Committee:
Mayor Ron Packard
Councilmember David Casas

Los Altos Hills Town Council Ad Hoc Committee:
Councilmember Gary Waldeck