

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL
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September 27, 2022

Increasing Health and Safety Protections for Communities on the Frontlines of Oil Drilling Operations

On September 15, 2021, the Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) unanimously approved [a motion](#) that set forth a new policy direction for oil drilling operations that prioritizes public health, environmental justice, and climate change mitigation by prohibiting new drilling permits and setting the stage for a phase out of oil drilling in unincorporated areas in the County. This decision was grounded in a substantial body of research that documents the harmful health impacts resulting from living in close proximity to oil drilling operations. Furthermore, County departments and community stakeholders elevated this issue as a priority action in the most recent OurCounty Sustainability Plan Annual Report.

Since the passage of this motion, the City of Los Angeles (City) has taken similar steps to initiate a phase out of oil drilling operations. Additionally, the City and County have begun working together with diverse stakeholders from impacted communities, labor, and industry on a long-term just transition strategy that ensures our region can phase out oil extraction while protecting frontline communities and workers. Most recently,

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Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill [1137](#) into law, preventing new oil wells from being sited within 3,200 feet of sensitive land uses and requiring new health and safety protections for existing oil wells within this distance of sensitive uses. These protections include limits on hours of operations, dust control measures, and leak detection and response plans that increase community notification and data transparency.

Because the phasing out of oil drilling operations will not happen overnight, it remains critical to have health protective policies to monitor and address immediate public health and safety concerns at oil drilling sites. In 2018, the County Department of Public Health (DPH) released [a report](#) recommending the implementation of air monitoring and community safety and notification plans at oil and gas facilities as part of a slate of health-protective policies and regulations. These same recommendations were also identified in the Oil and Gas Strike Team's 2017 [report](#). Specifically, DPH advised that health protections are needed to address air quality and odor monitoring, transportation of chemicals in residential areas, pipeline monitoring and leak detection, abandonment of idle wells, Emergency Response Plans, and communication with surrounding communities. Given recent oil extraction policy changes at the state and local level, the County should analyze where additional health and safety policies are needed and where gaps in state and local policies remain.

One immediate step that can be taken is the development of an equity-based framework for a Community Air Monitoring Pilot Program that can be used to apply for grant funding opportunities at the State and Federal level. Existing community-scale air monitoring programs in the County have regularly detected leaks, demonstrating the need for continuous monitoring near oil drilling sites. Through the development of a community air monitoring program the County can strengthen oversight, inter-agency coordination, and data transparency for environmental justice communities on the frontlines of oil extraction. Establishing a pilot program overseen by DPH will also enable the County to collect and publicly share more robust air monitoring data and ultimately provide long-term policy, programmatic and funding recommendations to ensure air quality does not worsen as oil drilling operations are phased out.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the Director of the Department of Public Health (DPH), in coordination with the Directors of the Department of Regional Planning (DRP), the Department of Public Works, the County Fire Health HazMat Materials Division (i.e. the Oil and Gas Strike Team), and the Chief Sustainability Office (CSO) to report back to the Board in writing within 120 days on potential policies and programs, including funding sources, to better protect the health and safety of communities in close proximity to oil and gas operations in alignment with the County's Oil Well Ordinance and Senate Bill 1137.
2. Direct the Director of DPH in consultation with the Director of DRP to report back in writing within 90 days with a detailed framework, budget, and any staffing or consultant resources needed for the development of a continuous Community Air Monitoring Pilot Program prioritizing oil and gas operations within 500 feet of sensitive receptors. This pilot program should include an environmental justice lens to identify air monitoring sites and include an evaluation component to develop additional long-term policy, program, and funding recommendations. It should also explore opportunities to utilize community science in air quality monitoring.
3. Direct the Chief Executive Office Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Division in coordination with the Director of DPH and the CSO to proactively advocate for State and Federal policies and funding to support health and safety protections, including continuous air monitoring programs near oil and gas operations.

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