

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

July 9, 2024

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT OF ILLEGAL MULCH DUMPING

Illegal dumping of mulch and trash has significantly impacted communities across the County, particularly in rural areas like the Antelope Valley. These activities remain a significant public nuisance, environmental justice hazard and dangerous fire risk to underserved communities. When burning, these trash-related fires cloud the entire Antelope Valley and surrounding communities in smoke, impact the health of hundreds of thousands of County residents. As some of these venues accept over 40 trucks of debris per day, it is imperative on the County to take aggressive action to protect our impacted communities and wildlife.

On May 28, 2024, the County of Los Angeles Fire Department reported to the Board the impact of mulch and trash-related fires on the Fire Department. Since 2020, the Fire Department cited 42 incidents, burning up to 22 acres per incident. The total cost to the Fire Department to respond to these fires was estimated at \$1.6 million. Given the difficulty to fight these fires, there is also a significant concern of trash-related fires demanding valuable resources and personnel when other fire incidents are concurrently impacting the County.

The state charters the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA), housed within the Department of Public Health (DPH), with local oversight and regulation of land spreading of mulch. There remain prominent gaps in state regulations to adequately restrict these operations and sufficiently prosecute violators. The County continues to work with state agencies, allowing local enforcement experiences to inform state policies.

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The County has prioritized environmental justice, and enforcement of environmental violations remains a key function of DPH and the LEA. However, additional resources could be allocated to respond to illegal dumping more adequately. Historically, the County had dedicated health inspection staff exclusively responding to illegal dumping reports and proactively going after violators. Due to resource reallocation, these positions were not maintained. Allocating new resources will allow the LEA to investigate complaints of illegal dumping and issue citations against property owners where unlawful solid waste dumping is occurring. This will be one component of a needed strategy, requiring assistance and partnership from the State, to begin addressing illegal dumping reports and compel mitigation of these environmental injustices.

Enforcing illegal dumping is a core obligation of DPH, and while the State and County are entering an uncertain fiscal period, the County still maintains a responsibility to execute all state-chartered responsibilities.

I THEREFORE Move that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office, in coordination with the Department of Public Health, Department of Public Works, Department of Regional Planning and Fire Department, as part of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Supplemental Budget phase, to report back and identify additional staffing and resources required to bolster the County's illegal dumping enforcement, consistent with the Fiscal Resilience Protocol.

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