



ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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City Council President Larry Reid  
Oakland City Hall  
1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Via e-mail: [lreid@oaklandnet.com](mailto:lreid@oaklandnet.com)

**RE: Crematorium Activity and Public Health**

Council President Reid:

The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) employs a range of strategies for protecting individual and community health, including analyzing public health impacts of land use planning decisions. **I write to express our support of requiring a Major Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to establish crematoriums.**

Cremators emit a number of criteria and toxic air pollutants such as particulate matter, sulfur compounds, lead, arsenic, hexavalent chromium, mercury and chlorinated dibenzodioxins, and furans.<sup>1</sup> Several of these emissions are known to exacerbate chronic conditions such as asthma, and have been linked to cancer.<sup>2</sup>

Given these potential health impacts, we agree that there should be public notice and a public process to determine conditions of approval, which would be required through a Major Conditional Use Permit. We understand that a crematorium, Sentinel Cremation Societies is currently being proposed for East Oakland and will emit a range of pollutants.<sup>3</sup> This community already faces a disproportionate burden from illness associated with air pollution: the rate of asthma Emergency Department (ED) visits in East Oakland is over two times higher than the Alameda County rate and one of the highest in the county, and among children under five years of age, the asthma ED visit rate in East Oakland is more than two times the County rate.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The criteria air pollutants from these cremators include: particulate matter, nitrogen compounds, sulfur compounds, carbon monoxide and precursor organic compounds. The toxic emissions from these cremators include: acetaldehyde, arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, copper, formaldehyde, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen fluoride, lead, mercury, nickel, selenium, chlorinated dibenzodioxins and furans, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons/ benzo (a) pyrene equivalents.

<sup>2</sup> California Air Resources Board. 2009. Air Pollution and Health Fact Sheet. <http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/health/fs/fs1/fs1.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Engineering Evaluation Report. Sentinel Cremation Societies, Inc. Plant #20905, Application #23669.

<sup>4</sup> For Zip codes 94621 & 94603, the rate of asthma ED visits is 1,230 per 100,000 residents; the Alameda County rate is 553 per 100,000. The asthma ED visit rate for children is 2,048 per 100,000 (0-4 year-olds) compared to the Alameda County rate of 1,301 per 100,000. Asthma inpatient hospitalization rate is 339 per 100,000 residents; the county rate is 147 per 100,000. The childhood asthma

Given the existing disproportionate burden of disease, a public process is necessary to protect community health.

ACPHD is dedicated to improving health of all Alameda County residents. Thank you for your leadership in advancing this important policy.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Flournoy, MPH  
Deputy Director and Director of Planning, Policy and Health Equity

cc: Councilmember Brooks;  
Councilmember Brunner;  
Councilmember De La Fuente;  
Councilmember Kaplan;  
Councilmember Kernighan;  
Councilmember Nadel, and  
Councilmember Schaaf