



**Pacific Gas and
Electric Company**

**Yvonne J. Meeks
Manager**

**Environmental Remediation
Gas Transmission & Distribution**

Mailing Address
4325 South Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Location
6588 Ontario Road
San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

**805.234.2257
Fax: 805.546.5232
E-mail: YJM1@pge.com**

August 3, 2009

Karen Baker
Performance Manager
Geological Services Unit
California Department of Toxic Substances Control
5796 Corporate Avenue
Cypress, California, 90630

Subject: RCRA Facility Investigation/Remedial Investigation Soil Investigation - Part B,
Pacific Gas and Electric Company Topock Compressor Station, Needles, California

Dear Ms. Baker,

This letter is written in response to DTSC's July 2, 2009 directive in response to PG&E's September 30, 2008 proposal to phase portions of the RCRA Facility Investigation/Remedial Investigation (RFI/RI) Soil Investigation - Part B for the Topock Compressor Station (TCS). DTSC's letter directs PG&E to proceed with the RFI/RI Soil Investigation - Part B for the Topock Compressor Station, as proposed in the December 14, 2007 *Draft RFI/RI Soil Investigation Work Plan Part B*, and to move forward with addressing all stakeholder comments to the Draft RFI/RI Work Plan. DTSC also directed PG&E to submit by August 3, 2009 a modified site schedule to re-establish all Part B activities.

PG&E proposes that we initiate implementation of each of the actions set forth in our September 30, 2008 letter, including the evaluation of potential migration pathways, through the sampling of exposed soils in the upper and lower yards, areas covered by gravel in the upper yard, and perimeter soils, and that we perform an assessment of the groundwater migration pathway through the installation of new groundwater monitoring wells. We anticipate that at least the groundwater monitoring wells can be included in the planning now scheduled to take place in late summer/early fall 2009 for Part 2 of the East Ravine groundwater investigation.

We will also implement the Part B work originally proposed to the extent that soils can be accessed for sampling without jeopardizing the integrity of our operating facilities or creating safety risks for our workers and the public. Our rationale for the original phasing request was that certain areas of the site are truly inaccessible for sampling during operation of the compressor station. We expect that to remain the case generally.

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However, there has been a significant development subsequent to PG&E's September 30, 2008 phasing proposal which could have an impact on the conduct of Part B soil investigations at Topock. The Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District has informed PG&E that by the end of 2009 they plan to adopt a rule requiring the achievement of federal Reasonably Available Control Technology for internal combustion engines located in the northeastern portion of San Bernardino County, including the location of the Topock Compressor Station. This rule will require a significant reduction in emission of oxides of nitrogen from the compressors at the Topock Compressor Station. PG&E expects the new rule will require PG&E to perform substantial modifications to the operating equipment at Topock, which may alter the existing footprint of the Station facilities. We are currently assessing various means to achieve compliance with the expected new rule. We anticipate that we will know the extent of potential physical changes to the Station facilities by February 2010. At that time, we will be in a position to identify whether and when areas that are now inaccessible may become available for sampling and other characterization.

Given this pending rule, PG&E respectfully requests that we defer implementation of Part B soil sampling at currently inaccessible locations within the station footprint until after February, 2010. This brief deferral will allow us to make any necessary modifications to the original Part B workplan to reflect any new areas that may become accessible as a result of the upcoming air quality compliance work.

Included in the actions PG&E would take now would be to provide documentation to DTSC of measures PG&E has taken to ensure worker health and safety at Topock. As we have made clear before, PG&E is committed to the safety of all our workers across all job functions, and thus we have in place a comprehensive program of safe practices to ensure that workers are properly protected from site hazards at all work sites. The existing safe work practices related to the presence of soil contaminants at the Topock Compressor Station are currently being reviewed and updated to incorporate additional site information. We are willing to provide DTSC with documentation of these updated safety practices when they are completed.

It bears mentioning that sole jurisdiction to regulate workplace safety issues at the Topock Compressor Station is held by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Division), which retains jurisdiction over workplace safety for public utilities pursuant to the Cal/OSHA program under the California Labor Code. Because employment safety issues are solely within the jurisdiction of the Division, PG&E is legally obligated to manage its employment safety obligations through interaction with the Division.

Finally, we note that DTSC's response to our request to phase the Part B work represents an abrupt shift from what we had understood the Department's position to be at the time of the proposal and in all the months following. While we are certainly prepared to comply with your directive—as has been our practice throughout this project—we hope that together we can foster a spirit of mutual trust that would enable regular communications to take place on upcoming decisions of such importance.

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We appreciate your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the foregoing proposal, please call me at (805) 234-2257 or Bob Doss at (415) 973-7601.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Yvonne Meeks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'Y' and a long, sweeping underline.

\By Robert C. Doss