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TO: All Interested Parties

FROM: The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services  
Environmental Health

SUBJECT: Beverly Hills High School

In early 2003, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (LAC/DHS) and the California Department of Health Services' Radiologic Health Branch (DHS/RHB) began receiving inquiries regarding the presence of radioactive materials at Beverly Hills High School (BHHS). Concerns were expressed in two distinct areas:

1. Concerns regarding exposure to unusual concentrations of naturally-occurring radioactive materials (NORM) created by oil pumping activities;
2. Concerns regarding the use of radioactive materials to test oil wells at the site.

In August and September 2003, DHS/RHB performed radiological surveys at the BHHS site, including the Veneco oil well site (Veneco site), and the BHHS campus. The results of these measurements were reviewed by LAC/DHS. The surveys included a radiation mapping survey to determine if there were elevated radiation levels in the top 6-12 inches of soil, laboratory analyses of soil samples to determine radioactive concentrations in the soil, and an evaluation of radon levels indoors at the BHHS campus, and outdoors at the

Veneco site and the BHHS campus. The results of each of these measurements were compared to a nearby “control” site, or to normal background radiation levels. Background radiation is present virtually everywhere, throughout the environment, so no concern is warranted where radiation levels do not exceed those found in the local, unaffected environment.

The results of the measurements indicate that: 1) no unusual concentrations of naturally occurring radioactive materials were detected at either the oil-well site or the adjacent areas of the BHHS campus, 2) indoor radon concentrations in school classrooms are at a normal level and well below the EPA action level for indoor radon, 3) outdoor radon concentrations at the oil-well site and adjacent BHHS campus areas are at a normal level, 4) no I-131 was detected at the surface at the oil-well site or the adjacent areas of the BHHS campus, and 5) while there were no known spills of I-131 used in the routine annual testing of oil wells, even if such a spill had occurred, the highest potential dose to a student at the fence-line between the campus and wells would be a small fraction of the allowed dose to members of the public.

In summary, no radiation levels or radioactive materials were identified above normal background levels at the BHHS. Based on a review of the oil well site operational history, the survey results, and the laboratory results, there is no evidence that the Veneco site has caused an increase in radioactive materials or radiation either on the BHHS campus, or at the Veneco site adjacent to the campus.