

Residents allege oil site brought acid, toxic chemicals to South L.A. neighborhood

mynews1a.com/life/2015/04/23/residents-allege-oil-site-brought-acid-toxic-chemicals-to-south-l-a-neighborhood

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April 23, 2015



Photo courtesy Jackie Pomeroy.

Residents and activists protested a Freeport-McMoRan oil drilling site in South Los Angeles Thursday, contending the oil exploration company's trucks are bringing acid and toxic chemicals through residential neighborhoods.

Protesters allege residents were not given notice about the trucks, which they believe are part of new operations using acids, and say ongoing oil extraction activities at the drill site have produced harmful fumes, noise and truck traffic close to their homes.

But representatives of the oil company insist they have not planned any new fracturing or well-stimulation operations, and are simply performing routine maintenance.

Jennifer Blue, a resident who took part in the protest near Jefferson Boulevard and Budlong Avenue, said that "as a mother of three, I want to tell Freeport to keep their acid away from

our kids.”

“This is a residential area, not an oil-drilling field,” she said. “We do not want these things in our community, near our homes or near our families.”

Freeport-McMoRan spokesman Eric Kinneberg said the company did not have any maintenance work planned today, but the company recently notified the local air control agency about “our intention to conduct routine and conventional well maintenance work.”

The maintenance work “is designed to remove calcium deposits from building up inside the well bore,” and “ensures the condition of the well is maintained in optimum condition,” he said.

“The work being planned is similar to the type of maintenance work that is performed on water supply wells all over the world and throughout the Los Angeles region,” he said.

Kinneberg also dismissed the protesters contentions that the company is engaged in hydraulic fracturing — or fracking — or other well-stimulation practices.

Jackie Pomeroy, a spokesman for the protesters, questioned the routine nature of the work, saying that “regardless of whether this activity is technically labeled ‘routine,’ Freeport-McMoRan “is bringing in upwards of 20,000 gallons of chemicals labeled with hazards like corrosive liquids and hydrochloric acid.”

If the company’s filings with the air control district had been identified as acidization, “it would trigger reporting requirements” under state law in which residents within 1500 feet of the drill site must be notified, Pomeroy said.

— *City News Service*