

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 13, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Secretary Foxx, Administrator McCarthy, and Attorney General Lynch:

On October 23, 2015, a natural gas leak was discovered at the Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Facility in Los Angeles County, California. Since then, approximately 80,000 metric tons of methane have been released in the ongoing, uncontrolled leak. Multiple efforts to stop the leak by the Southern California Gas Company, which owns the storage facility, have not been successful. The company is currently drilling a relief well in an attempt to stop the leak. Under the best case scenario, the relief well is expected to take several more weeks to complete, and the leak continues in the meantime.

We have great concern for the thousands of residents of the nearby community of Porter Ranch who have been impacted by this ongoing disaster. Families have been moved to temporary housing and children are attending school at alternative campuses. Residents also complain of respiratory problems, headaches, nausea, and nosebleeds.

In response to the ongoing disaster and the continued impacts on the local community, last week the Governor of California declared a State of Emergency and mobilized numerous state agencies to assist in the response effort. We believe that it is critical that the Federal government also play an active role, in cooperation with its partner agencies in the State of California, to stop this ongoing leak and address the impacts to local residents.

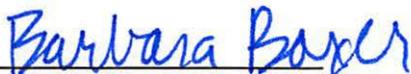
After consultation with Federal and State agencies in California, it is clear that the Federal government can play an important role. Our staff has been in regular contact with your agencies in recent weeks, and we appreciate the feedback you have provided. To facilitate our continued oversight and determine how Federal agencies can be of further assistance to the response effort, we request that you provide us with the following information:

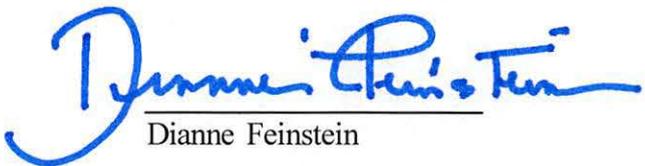
1. An update on actions taken by each of your agencies to date, including any direction or advice you are providing to State agencies and Southern California Gas Company on the response.

2. A description of how state agencies have exercised any delegated Federal authorities in relation to this natural gas leak and a description of your oversight of the use of these Federal authorities.
3. A legal analysis of any Federal authorities that could apply to this incident and storage fields in general and how your agencies have exercised these authorities to date.
4. A technical analysis of whether Southern California Gas Company could more quickly reduce the gas stored in the facility to mitigate the uncontrolled leak of natural gas.

Please provide this information no later than close of business Friday, January 15, 2016. In addition, we ask that you brief our staff on these issues.

Sincerely,


Barbara Boxer


Dianne Feinstein

CC:

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Governor, State of California

The Honorable Marie Therese Dominguez, Administrator, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials
Safety Administration

The Honorable John C. Cruden, Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice