



# County of Santa Cruz

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## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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AGENDA: 12/12/00

December 4, 2000

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: INCLUSION OF PLANS TO ADDRESS GASOLINE SHORTAGES  
IN THE COUNTY'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Dear Members of the Board:

As Board members will recall, we have been receiving status reports on the development of an emergency management plan for Santa Cruz County. The General Services Department is scheduled to present the plan to the Board at our meeting of January 23, 2001.

Attached is a copy of a letter from the County's Energy Commission urging that local contingency planning for shortages of motor vehicle fuels also be included as part of the County's emergency management planning efforts. The Commission's letter provides a thoughtful analysis of the problems associated with fuel shortages experienced during times of emergency, underscores the need for advance planning at the local level, and outlines the authority granted to counties to ensure that plans are in place for the distribution of vehicular fuel during times of emergency. Accordingly, I recommend that the Board direct the General Services Department to provide a response to the recommendations of the Energy Commission regarding the inclusion of local contingency planning measures relative to vehicle fuel shortages on or before January 23, 2001.

Sincerely,

MARDI WORMHOUDT, Chair  
Board of Supervisors

MW:ted  
Attachment

cc: Energy Commission; General Services Department;  
County Administrative Office

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# County of Santa Cruz

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## ENERGY COMMISSION

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 330, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073  
(831) 454-2718 FAX: (831) 454-2710 TDD: (831) 454-2123

November 21, 2000

Board of Supervisors  
COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: Local Contingency Planning for Motor Fuels Shortages

Dear Supervisors:

Given the current situation with gasoline prices in California, it is important that we remember the lessons of the past regarding gasoline shortages and develop a plan to deal with these unforeseen situations. Several times in the last quarter-century we have seen the potential consequences of our near-total dependence upon and vulnerability to foreign oil suppliers. Production curtailments and significant price increases in 1973, 1979, 1990, 1998 and 2000, even the relatively modest East Bay refinery problems in 1999 were sufficient to temporarily close a number of gasoline service stations and produce waiting lines at many others. During the 1973 Arab Oil Embargo, which was a supply reduction of only 2%, fistfights regularly broke out among customers trying to get the limited gasoline available at the few stations able to remain open. That embargo crippled our mobility and created nationwide turmoil that bordered on panic. Today, world oil supplies are controlled by fewer countries than was the case then, and more of those countries are politically unstable and/or antagonistic to the west. With roughly 50% of transportation fuel coming from foreign sources, the serious consequences of interruption, shortage, or curtailment of supply cannot be overstated.

As an outgrowth of these concerns, federal, state, and local governments have increased efforts to prepare for potential shortages. In California, the Warren-Alquist Act has found and declared that "over dependence on the production, marketing, and consumption of petroleum-based fuels as an energy resource is a threat to the energy security of the state." The California Energy Commission (CEC) is required by the Warren-Alquist Act to prepare a state emergency plan, the latest available issue being the 1996 Contingency Plan. As the County Energy Commission reads this plan, in the event of an emergency or a managed oil shortage, and absent a local alternative, the 1996 Plan would be implemented in Santa Cruz County. Measures established in the 1996 Plan for an oil shortage include the 1970's era "odd-even" license-plate means of rationing gasoline distribution. The County Energy Commission is unanimous in viewing the odd-even scheme as an energy disaster and an administrative fiasco. It is easily circumvented,

SCCEC  
Fuel Shortage Contingency Plan  
November 21, 2000  
Page Two

impossible to enforce, and includes no effective means of identifying local residents - all critical shortcomings to achieving the goals and protections of an effective local contingency plan. Also, the odd-even plan actually creates longer lines as people feel they have to fill their tanks on their appointed day.

We are dependent upon cars and trucks for emergency services, food and supply provisions, shipping and receiving for business and commerce, personal transportation, and emergency evacuation. Because of this dependency, our susceptibility to profound problems as a result of gasoline supply interruption or limitation grows. The importance and need for an effective strategy for the emergency distribution of fuel in the event of severe shortage or supply interruption have never been greater or more urgent.

Here in Santa Cruz County, we are well aware of our vulnerability to natural disasters. For many, the hardships and urgencies following the Loma Prieta Earthquake were further complicated when gasoline became much less available as a result of power outages and closed roads. Stations that did have fuel available and power to dispense it were soon sold out as word spread and customers from throughout the County arrived.

It is estimated that there is roughly an eight-day supply of vehicle fuel on-hand at any given time throughout the State in the tanks of retail stations and at distribution facilities. It is reasonable to assume a similar or lesser supply locally. The roads serving as principal transportation corridors for Santa Cruz County - Highway 152, Highway 17, Highway 9, and Highway 1 - have all demonstrated a history of damage and closure from severe weather, earthquake, or other conditions seen with some regularity. Over 100 million gallons of gasoline are consumed in the County annually, all of it arriving via one of these Highways. Any number of events could result in an interruption of supply and with our limited airport and rail services, realistic options in the event of an emergency are limited.

Law enforcement and emergency operations, medical and rescue services, food and supply deliveries, evacuations, and general citizen mobility are all dependent upon access to gasoline. A catastrophic event could very easily isolate the County, and even a prolonged political action or delivery freezes could cause major disruption to local government, business, and community. This vulnerability makes it essential that a workable, efficient, easily implemented contingency plan be in place to provide for emergency transportation needs and, to the extent possible, to equitably serve the business and personal transportation interests of County residents.

An effective local plan would include the details of conditions under which it might be implemented, set notification procedures, would establish and prioritize emergency personnel and services, detail the administrative and enforcement procedures, define retail supplier responsibilities, establish the means of identifying local residents and the method by which they will be provided access to fueling. The plan would be flexible enough to be implemented quickly and remain efficient under a variety of conditions ranging from chaos to coherence.

The 1996 CEC Contingency Plan and the State Legislature have given local jurisdictions both authority and encouragement to prepare alternative plans.

SCCEC  
Fuel Shortage Contingency Plan  
November 21, 2000  
Page Three

The State Motor Vehicle Fuel Conservation Act of 1980 designates a lead role for California counties in developing emergency plans for the distribution of vehicular fuel. This act:

1. Permits county-level authority to manage the initial stages of any statewide shortfall.
2. Authorizes counties to implement measures necessary to achieve reduction in gasoline consumption.
3. Encourages the preparation of a local contingency plan which addresses the issues of maintaining mobility and the equitable distribution of available fuel.
4. Requires that local plan development ensures full public discussion and operability.

The County Energy Commission recommends that your Board include a specific fuel or gasoline allocation element in the County Emergency Plan to address such outages or emergencies, directing the appropriate County Department to prepare for your review a recommendation that meets the provisions of the State Motor Vehicle Fuel Conservation Act of 1980 and the needs of the citizens of Santa Cruz County.

Sincerely,



HENRY PIELAGE, Chair

HP:DB:mc