

Pasadena Citizens' Advisory Council

www.pasadenacac.org

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

Emergency Vehicles Displayed, Community Warning Systems Discussed at PCAC

Pasadena Citizens' Advisory Council (PCAC) members and guests were treated to an emergency response equipment display prior to the meeting. They explored the capabilities of several types of equipment that could be used, for example, if there were a major fire in a plant: the Channel Industries Mutual Aid (CIMA) Command Unit, the LyondellBasell aerial pumper, the OxyVinyls ambulance, and the Harris County HazMat truck. They also were able to talk to those who operate the equipment about how it is used in a significant industrial event.

After the display ended, the meeting began with the City of Pasadena Emergency Management Coordinator, Frank Bengochea, reminding members of the ways the city can communicate emergency information such as a call to shelter in place or to evacuate in a hurricane. The attached slides list ways that plants would notify the city of a significant chemical event. Primarily, they use a computerized system called e-Notify, though the city also would usually talk to them before calling for a shelter in place.

Bengochea also reviewed the various methods the city uses to communicate with the community, including Swiftreach, sirens, and social media. See slides for a complete list as well as instructions for signing up for Swiftreach. The Swiftreach database includes landline numbers automatically, but one must sign up to receive calls to cell phones or unlisted numbers as well as text or email messages. Sign up at www.pasadenatx.gov/394/Swift911

Knowing there were questions about how the city decides to call for a shelter in place, Bengochea walked attendees through a timeline related to the ITC fire and the steps the city took to determine whether a shelter in place was needed. They had access to real-time air monitoring data, a computer model called CAMEO that provides guidelines for levels of exposure to benzene considered acute, weather information, and a comparison to exposure levels when filling a car's gasoline tank (~15 parts per million). They determined they would call for a shelter in place if benzene were detected at 1 part per million or above and repeated at that level after 15 minutes. Handheld monitoring equipment can detect benzene at 0.025 ppm. The nose can smell it at lower levels. There were no benzene detections in Pasadena, so the city did not call for a shelter in place.

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