



June 12, 2023

Honorable Jim Desmond
County of San Diego Board of Supervisors, District 5
1600 Pacific Hwy Suite A500
San Diego, CA 92101

Subject: Community Lead Exposure and the Use of Avgas at McClellan-Palomar Airport

Dear Supervisor Desmond and the Board of Supervisors:

The City of Vista is pleased that the County of San Diego has submitted a letter to the Office of Airports, Western-Pacific Region, Federal Aviation Administration regarding the concerns of leaded aviation gasoline (avgas) at the County of San Diego Airports. The City of Vista has received comments from concerned community members regarding the use of avgas at the McClellan-Palomar airport in our county. As you are aware, avgas has been the primary fuel for piston aircraft engines for many decades. However, it is a known that it contains a high amount of lead, which poses potential health risks to the residents in the area and pilots who use the McClellan-Palomar airport.

In recent years, there have been reports of lead exposure and environmental contamination caused by avgas use at airports across the country. Santa Monica airport has become a showcase of the harmful effects of lead in aviation fuel. The airport's proximity to residential areas has led to widespread lead contamination of soil, water, and air, causing health risks to the community. Moreover, there have been numerous legal cases filed against the airport authorities for failing to protect public health and the environment.

Recently, the County of Santa Clara and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reached a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the Reid-Hillview airport. The agreement aims to phase out the use of avgas at the airport and transition to unleaded fuel. This move demonstrates that the FAA recognizes the need to mitigate the risks of leaded fuel and promote public health and environmental protection.

Specific new studies underline the dangers of avgas to human health and the environment. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognizes the negative impact that leaded fuel has on the environment. Consequently, the EPA announced in 2018 that it would take steps to phase out the use of leaded fuel in general aviation aircraft over the next decade.

The City of Vista applauds your effort to ensure this issue is addressed and appreciates the County's recommendation to collaborate with the FAA and partnerships with private industries to try and get the lead out early. In alignment with the County, we are also optimistic in an early success and support the FAA's EAGLE initiative, which includes a goal for a transition to lead-free aviation fuel by 2030. We urge phasing out the use of avgas sooner than later, as this will send a strong message that the County of San Diego is committed to the health and well-being of its residents, and that it recognizes the essential need to protect the environment for future generations.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your leadership.

Sincerely,



John Conley
City Manager

Cc: City of Vista City Council