

ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

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At concrete batch plants, materials like cement, sand, water, rocks, and aggregates are combined and mixed together, subsequently poured into trucks, and then transported to nearby construction projects. (Katie Watkins/Houston Public Media)



Fort Bend ISD's Thurgood Marshall High School



Residents were allowed to ask questions and share comments during the TCEQ meeting.



Fort Bend's Buffalo Run Park



Inside the TCEQ public meeting held at the Houston Community College - Missouri City Campus

residential homes, schools, parks, local businesses, and other places where people live, work, and play.

Concrete batch plants produce lots of dust, especially the smallest and most difficult-to-detect dust, known as fine particulate matter or PM2.5. These particles can penetrate deep into the lungs and may enter the bloodstream. This kind of pollution can pose serious health risks.

MISSOURI CITY BATCH PLANT

The *Forward Times* published an article in December of last year entitled *Air Pollution in Houston: People of Color Are the Primary Target*, in which we emphasized that research shows air pollution negatively impacts people of color in certain areas of Greater Houston.

The zip code in question in Missouri City (77489) is predominantly African American, and a potential concrete batch plant would contribute to the narrative that these types of facilities are always proposed in areas that are primarily populated by people of color.

TCEQ recently held a public meeting, requested by State Senator Borris Miles (Senate District 13), on December 12th at the Houston Community College–Missouri City Campus, where they heard public comments on the proposed specialty concrete batch facility.

Residents were allowed to ask questions during the first part of the meeting, and during the second part, they were able to share comments during the public comment portion, which TCEQ states they will take into consideration during the permitting process.

Senator Miles, who represents the area that would be impacted by the concrete batch plant in Missouri City, shared his concerns about the concrete crushers and batch plants that have been a public nuisance to the African American community for decades.

“These facilities have negatively impacted residents near these facilities with severe health issues like lung cancer, kidney disease, and autoimmune disease caused by the toxic hazardous waste in the air,” said Senator Miles. “Senate District 13 has one of the highest numbers of concrete plants and industrial facilities in the state. Since joining the Texas Legislature in 2007, I have been fighting against these industrial facilities that are NEVER located in

more affluent neighborhoods like River Oaks, Uptown Galleria, West University, and Memorial. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!”

Air Alliance Houston, a nonprofit advocacy organization with a mission to reduce the public health impacts of air pollution and advance environmental justice through research, education, and advocacy, also spoke out against the proposed concrete batch plant and strongly encouraged others to do the same.

AIR QUALITY CONCERNS

According to Air Alliance Houston, here are some of the health risks posed by pollution from concrete batch plants in a community:

- The pollution can lead to heart and lung disease, as well as cancer, and is known to affect lung development in children.
- The pollution is known to trigger or worsen chronic diseases such as asthma, heart attack, bronchitis, and other respiratory problems.
- The pollution has been associated with a higher risk for birth defects when pregnant people are exposed.
- The pollution may cause immediate or delayed irritation.
- Diesel-fueled vehicles within the heavy-duty fleet emit black carbon and nitrogen oxide into residential neighborhoods.
- Diesel exhaust contains both very small particles and 40 chemicals that are classified as “hazardous air pollutants” under the Clean Air Act. The pollution in the exhaust can aggravate asthma and allergies, as well as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.
- Vehicle emissions are still present and harmful even when you can’t see the exhaust.
- If the facility operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, residents may be subject to 24/7 exposure to harmful air pollutants that can exacerbate existing health conditions.

Another quality-of-life challenge that concrete batch plants pose includes the significant increase in heavy-duty vehicles traveling on neighborhood roadways, along with the noise, traffic, and wear and tear on local roadways, which makes living and traveling in the area unsafe and unbearable.

ACTION MUST BE TAKEN

According to records, Harris County Pollution Control issued over 80 violation notices after conducting 149 inspections of Harris County concrete batch plants and other aggregate processing facilities in 2021.

Earlier this year, Harris County Attorney Christian Menefee brought a lawsuit against Texcon Ready Mix, a concrete batch plant located in Greater Fifth Ward. The Harris County Attorney’s office stated that they took action to tackle pollution from the plants after Harris County residents complained about pollution from concrete dust that spread through air and water.

The Harris County Attorney’s office claimed Texcon Ready Mix violated the Texas Clean Air Act, Texas Water Code, Texas Solid Waste Disposal Act, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality rules with their actions.

In seeking to successfully challenge a permit, one of the primary focuses of the challenge must be on highlighting the possible impacts to the health and quality of life of the people in the community, as TCEQ is only concerned with air pollution impacts on health and environmental welfare. Community members and environmental advocates are hoping their comments did that.

Angel Jones, City Manager for Missouri City, submitted comments on the matter, and no active permits have been issued by the City at this time, according to city officials. The community continues to speak out and is awaiting the decision by TCEQ.

The *Forward Times* will continue to monitor this important environmental issue that could significantly negatively affect the African American community.

CLASSIFIEDS

HELP WANTED

ENGRNG
Heliogen Holdings, Inc. has a job oppty in Houston, TX for a Prncpl Intrstment & Ctrls Engr. Hybrid pstn req'd work in the office w/ the abilty telecom on days when not in the office. Email resume w/Ref# 8247518 to meline@heliogen.com. Must be legally auth to work in the US w/o spnsrshp. EOE

LEGAL NOTICE

Does anyone know where Skyla Grace Carter father is? Mother Jamika Petro, please call 832-378-2435

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Request for Proposal – Houston-Galveston Area Council – Public Services– Temporary Staffing, Direct Hire and Other Employer Services – TS06-25
H-GAC is soliciting responses for selecting qualified service providers for Temporary Staffing, Direct-Hire and Other Employer Services to make these types of services available to Customers of the HGACBuy Cooperative Purchasing Program under blanket type contracts.
To view the solicitation documents, visit <https://www.hgacbuy.org/bid-notice>.
Response Deadline: January 23, 2025 @ 12:00 P.M. CST