



COMMUNITY NEWS *from the* *Offices of Oakland City Councilmember Desley Brooks*

MEDIA RELEASE

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ILLEGAL TOXICS BUSINESS SHUT DOWN

(Oakland, CA - February 27, 2006) American Fumigation, an illegally operating toxics business in District 6, was shut down by Councilperson Desley Brooks and City staff. The company fumigated fruits, vegetables, beans and other goods, and engaged in "Imminently Hazardous Business Activities". Councilperson Brooks teamed with the Oakland Fire, Police and Planning Departments; City Attorney's office; Oakland Code Compliance Unit; and City Administrator's office in this successful public health and welfare protection action.

Three toxic materials used in the operation - Methyl Bromide, Aluminum Phoshide and Propylene Oxide - have stringent regulations about handling and use near homes. However, American Fumigation failed to file the required Hazardous Materials Business Plan (HMBP) or Risk Management Plan (ARMAP) with Alameda County or the Oakland Fire Department. Brooks said "the failure to submit the required plans put the community in imminent danger, not just from a health perspective, but also from a safety perspective. "Leroy Griffin of the Oakland Fire Department stated that Station 29, which is in the same block as American Fumigation, had no knowledge of the storage or usage of these toxic substances. One of the chemicals, Aluminum Phoshide, can be inhaled possibly impairing cardiovascular and nervous systems, and causing respiratory failure. Exposure may also result in death.

On site fumigation was done in a self enclosed vacuum chamber and gases were sent into the air through a 20 foot stack. Brooks said "this is particularly frightening since the majority of these toxic substances go into the air rather than the products being fumigated." No abatement devices or secondary ventilation system were provided.

Further, Aluminum Phoshide decomposes on contact with water, moist air and acids, producing highly flammable and toxic gases. An explosion could have occurred if unknowing Fire Fighters responded to a fire here and used water to control the blaze.

“I took action out of a deep concern about the long-term health and safety consequences to residents of this neighborhood,” Brooks said.

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