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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Concerns Related to Refugio Oil Spill

Although there have been a few reports of people that experienced headaches or eye and throat irritation yesterday, we are not aware of anyone that has required medical attention related to the oil spill. However, the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department cautions residents that there are potential health impacts from the Refugio oil spill.

There are three immediate health risks related to exposure:

- Direct contact – Direct contact with oil can cause skin irritation.
- Inhalation – Breathing oil fumes can cause headaches, nausea, vomiting, confusion, lethargy, eye, nose and throat irritation and respiratory difficulties.
- Ingestion – Eating contaminated fish or seafood can cause illness.

The Health Department recommends all residents avoid contact with areas where the oil spill is present. Refugio Beach remains closed and is considered a Hazmat area and only personnel with Hazmat credentials are authorized to be on the beach.

A public health work group comprised of health experts, toxicologists and hazardous materials specialists has been established within the County's Emergency Operations Center.

The Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health (OTEH) is performing 24 hour ambient air testing. They will also be doing water and sediment testing during and after clean-up. Testing will detect substances harmful to human health and the environment and this data is being reviewed on a continuous basis by the public health work group. At this time there have been no levels of harmful substances detected that met threshold levels of concern.

Simply smelling an odor does not equate to health effects. Testing will continue through the initial clean-up phases until we are confident that there is no ongoing risk to public health.

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