



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION  
EL TORO (SANTA ANA), CALIFORNIA 92709-5001

M60050-001075

IN REPLY REFER TO:

IAA/3000C

7 April 1989

M60050.001075  
MCAS EL TORO  
SSIC # 5090.3

Mr. William P. Mills  
General Manager  
Orange County Water District  
10500 Ellis Avenue, P.O. Box 8300  
Fountain Valley, CA 92728-8300

Dear Mr. Mills,

I consider the actions of this week by the Orange County Water District (OCWD) management and staff with regard to trichloroethylene (TCE) contamination of groundwater to be irresponsible, unprofessional and misleading to both the OCWD Board of Directors and the general public.

As you are well aware, the Marine Corps has been and remains committed to the thorough investigation of the TCE problem and to effective remedial action for any and all portions of TCE contamination that are a result of past practices at MCAS El Toro. Toward this end, the Air Station and OCWD cooperated to draft and execute a Memorandum of Understanding (M60050-88337-29E, copy appended) which detailed actions to be taken by both parties to ensure a complete identification as to the extent of the contamination and to identify possible source(s). The parties further agreed that "the issue of whether MCAS is a source of TCE contamination will be addressed by USMC and OCWD after all of the field investigations have been completed and the data interpreted", and that "the OCWD and USMC will employ due diligence in carrying out the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding".

Your authorization of a presentation to the regular meeting of the OCWD Board of Directors on April 5, 1989 of OCWD staff's "Phase I Report, Investigation of Trichloroethylene Contamination in the Vicinity of the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station (dated 29 March 1989)" represents a unilateral action and breach of our Memorandum of Understanding. Worse, the report has drawn conclusions and assigned responsibility without regard to or the benefit of the professional analysis and final recommendations of an extensive (\$1.2 million) investigation of TCE contamination within the boundaries of the Air Station. While I am confident that the data, analysis and recommendation of the Air Station study will ultimately result in your modifying the conclusions of the OCWD study, I take great exception to the fact that you have presented your study unilaterally to the board and misrepresented it as fully incorporating the data, analysis, findings and conclusions of the Air Station study and as a joint effort (e.g., Phase I Study, Executive Summary page i, paragraph 1 "The District and the Marines have shared information gathered from the respective studies, and

data from both studies have been incorporated into the analysis, findings and conclusions of this investigation"). This is particularly unprofessional and irresponsible given that the final analysis, conclusions and recommendations of the Marine Corps' study were due to be submitted and briefed to you and your staff within 2 weeks of the April 5 Board of Directors meeting.

Notwithstanding your actions, I remain committed to our Memorandum of Understanding. My staff and representatives of our consultant, Montgomery Engineers, will be prepared to present the results of our study to you and your staff on 17 April 1989 and to the full Board of Directors at the regular meeting on 19 April 1989.

In the interim, I want you to clearly understand that I consider timely, effective remedial action to be of the highest priority. Preliminary results of our on-base study indicate areas of TCE contamination along the Southern boundary of the Air Station. Action has already been initiated to seek proper authority and funding to characterize the extent of contamination in these areas, both on and off the Air Station. Concurrently, the Marine Corps will be designing and installing the necessary wells, pumps and piping to start treatment of contaminated groundwater in these areas.

In closing, I want to emphasize that mutual cooperation is imperative in the investigation, and ultimate clean-up of TCE contamination. Unilateral, precipitative action by either party serves only to misinform and add confusion to a complex and critical subject. I again solicit your professional cooperation. Rest assured, you have mine.

Sincerely,



D. V. SHUTER  
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commanding

Copy to:  
CMC (IL)

cc: Members, Orange County Board of Supervisors  
Members, Orange County Water District, Board of Directors

Blind copy to:  
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