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News

Fuel Pipeline Slated For Repair

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A pipeline for aviation fuel that runs through the La Playa and Rosecrans areas is currently shut down and will not be reactivated until the Navy is convinced it is safe, the Point Loma Association (PLA) was told at its April 10 meeting. The 8-inch pipeline carries jet fuel from docks in La Playa to the Miramar Naval Air Station.

Lt. Cmdr. Pat Ryan, director of the fuel department for the Navy's Fleet and Industrial Supply Center, was an invited speaker at the meeting because of the PLA's concern over recent fuel spills. He reported that there was an underground leak near San Antonio and Qualtrough streets in October 1995, a small leak into the city sewer system near San Antonio and Owens streets on March 1 of this year, and a spill of more than 1,500 gallons of fuel into the bay near the San Diego Yacht Club March 6-8.

"We are not going to operate the pipeline again until we do a complete evaluation," Lt. Cmdr. Ryan

said. An initial test, which involved filling the pipeline with a nitrogen-helium mixture and testing for leakage of helium, found two leaks — one near San Antonio and McCall streets and one along San Antonio between Owens and Qualtrough streets. The latter location probably represents the same defect that caused the March 1 leak, he said.

All leaking sections of pipe will be replaced, he said. A new process to detect corrosion problems within 30 days of their occurrence will be implemented, and a leak detection system to provide earlier warning of a leak is also being developed. "We hope to avoid the past method, of repairing things after they break," Lt. Cmdr. Ryan said.

Association chairman Ray Broady said he would like to see the pipeline relocated farther inland so that it is not exposed to the corroding effects of salt water. "It is ridiculous for the Navy to spend any more money on that pipeline (where it runs close to the bay)," he said. "It should be replaced on the land side."

"(Moving the pipeline) has not been discussed, but I will bring it up," Lt. Cmdr. Ryan replied. The Navy believes the pipeline can be repaired and monitored and will be safe, he said. For now, fuel is being transported to Miramar via another pipeline from the Los Angeles area. The alternative is trucking, which the Navy prefers to avoid because statistics show it is the most dangerous way to transport fuel.

In other business, the PLA board voted to recommend that Point Loma Village and the Rosecrans corridor be included in the city's North Bay Survey Area. This is a planning department survey which could lead to inclusion in the proposed Naval Training Center redevelopment district.

PLA board member Hugh Story reported that Caffino's has canceled its plans to build a drive-through coffee stand at the corner of Nimitz Boulevard and Rosecrans Street. He described the decision as "a blow to us," because the board is anxious to attract a business to that corner, currently an unsightly vacant lot.