

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
CALIFORNIA WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL COAST REGION

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF MAY 13, 2005

Prepared on April 13, 2005

ITEM NUMBER: 10

SUBJECT: Special Recognition For Monterey County CUPA Program

**SUMMARY**

The Central Coast Regional Board periodically recognizes agencies, organizations and individuals for exemplary work in protecting water quality. Today's item is recognition of the County of Monterey, Department of Health, Division of Environmental Health, Hazardous Materials Branch, for receiving the 2004 Unified Program Agency Environmental Leadership Award.

**DISCUSSION**

The Unified Program is the consolidation of six state environmental programs (Hazardous Materials Business Plan/Emergency Response Plan, Hazardous Waste/Tiered Permitting, Underground Storage Tanks, Aboveground Storage Tanks, California Accidental Release Program and the Uniform Fire Code Hazardous Materials Management Plan) into one program under the authority of a Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). These can be a county, city or JPA (Joint Powers Authority) certified by CalEPA. This program was established under the amendments to the California Health and Safety Code made by SB 1082 in 1994. The CUPA is responsible for protecting the health and safety of the public and the environment by ensuring the safe handling of hazardous materials. There are 84 CUPAs in California, one of which is the County of Monterey's Hazardous Materials Branch of the Division of Environmental Health. The Hazardous Material Branch achieved statewide recognition for receiving the 2004 Unified Program Agency Environmental Leadership Award at the annual statewide conference of CUPA agencies in Universal City in February 2005.

The award was based on accomplishments in five areas: (1) specific contributions enhancing environmental protection and/or public health and

safety; (2) outstanding leadership; (3) enhancement of communication between Unified Program Agencies, industry, non-government organizations, and/or the community; (4) innovation/uniqueness; and (5) program results.

The Hazardous Materials Branch is responsible for ensuring the safe handling of hazardous materials throughout Monterey County. The Branch inspects over 1900 facilities handling hazardous materials, performs emergency response countywide twenty-four hours a day-seven days a week, is the permitting authority for underground storage tanks, oversees upgrades and removal of underground tanks, oversees the cleanup of leaking underground and aboveground storage tanks and all types of hazardous materials spills, and coordinates with Regional Board staff when cleanup involves groundwater or surface water resources.

During 2004, the Branch provided outstanding environmental leadership in Monterey County through a balance of education and outreach and aggressive enforcement. They worked closely with the City of Salinas and the Growers Shippers Association to sponsor an Environmental Compliance Workshop with over 300 attendees. They continued to partner with industry to co-sponsor the annual ammonia safety workshop (The Salinas Valley Ammonia Safety Day) with over 450 attendees, and they provided speakers and written materials for numerous local school, college and business events.

Branch investigators also worked closely with the Office of the District Attorney to vigorously prosecute those who would violate our environmental laws. They successfully investigated and prosecuted local, regional and statewide cases with settlements totaling over \$17 million, and they worked to investigate several criminal cases resulting in felony and

misdemeanor penalties for hazardous waste dumping and other environmental crimes. In particular, the Branch worked with the county District Attorney's office, the County of San Joaquin, the County of Sacramento, and the state Attorney General's office to obtain a \$15 million settlement with a major convenience store chain over violations of underground tank regulations at their stores.

As a result of their leadership in environmental education and enforcement, regulated businesses and the general public are more aware of and in compliance with environmental laws and regulations, and the public, the environment and water quality are better protected.

The Regional Board and Regional Board staff congratulates and recognizes the members of the Hazardous Materials Branch, past and present, for their recognition achieved by receiving the 2004 Unified Program Agency Environmental Leadership Award.

JG:S/UST/UST PROGRAM/MONTEREY COUNTY CUPA  
AWARD RECOGNITION