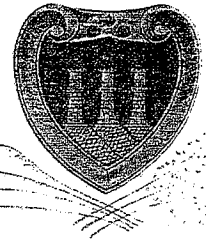


# City of San Marino



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CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER  
QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
LOS ANGELES REGION

Ms. Tracy Egoscue, Executive Officer  
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board  
320 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200  
Los Angeles California, 90013

**Subject: Comments regarding the proposed Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit for Ventura County.**

Dear Ms. Egoscue:

The following comments have been provided by Chief John Penido, of the San Marino Fire Department, to express his concern over the impacts to Fire Service Preparedness if the language contained within the Draft Ventura County MS4 permit is adopted in its current form. Fire Departments throughout California are dealing with the same economic conditions that the State and Federal Governments are addressing with legislation. Funds are not available for many of the training activities that the fire service once enjoyed. Now the Water Board is proposing to impose restrictive new conditions on the fire service as they go about their assignment of protecting the life, safety and welfare of the residents of their communities.

Part 1.A.1.(c).(2) lists "Category B – Flows from emergency fire fighting activities." As an exempt discharge when they are not the source of pollutants that exceed water quality standards. Table 1 contains a condition under which the discharge is allowed. The condition is "Pooled water after fire must be controlled." This limit will put fire departments statewide in a difficult position.

Everyone understands that putting water on a fire is in direct response to the fire emergency. In addition, during the period when the debris is still smoldering and the fire fighters are making sure that the fire is out, the overhaul of the site, that activity is also part of the emergency.

The difficulty comes when the fire is out and the fire department begins the final part of their responsibility. Currently, the fire fighters transition from the emergency response to the event clean up. The water that the fire department has applied during the emergency must be dealt with because it will continue to damage the weakened structure. If they must stop to set up BMPs or, worse, turn the site over to Hazmat for the removal of the remaining water, assuming that it is contaminated with chemicals, it will increase costs and become a burden on the property owner and the tax paying public. Since every site is unique, it is impossible for the fire department to respond with the necessary material and equipment to implement effective BMPs for every situation. So the fire department is required to either tell the property owner that the cleanup is his responsibility or they must try to implement a "universal" BMP that may or may not be effective to deal with the pooled water at the site. **I would ask that the Board expand the definition of the emergency to include the "Pooled Water after fire".**

Another indirect impact of the provisions of Part 1.A.1.(c).(3) is an unintended impact on fire service training. While the hydrostatic testing of fire hydrants is not the responsibility of the fire department it serves two purposes in assuring that the fire department is ready and able to respond to an emergency.

During the training that fire personnel undergo, on a regular basis, they will drive to a predefined area and practice the deployment of equipment that will include the flowing of a fire hydrant. This assures the fire department that water is available for their use at this location in sufficient quantity for them to be effective in an emergency. The condition contained in Table 1 will limit the fire department's ability to use this element in training. The condition itself is complex and states "discharges from water lines and potable water sources shall be dechlorinated, pH adjusted if necessary, reoxygenated, and volumetrically and velocity controlled to prevent resuspension of sediment." How would the fire crew know the answer to these questions? With the Board's consideration of the Potable Water System Discharge permit is this provision needed in the MS4 permit?

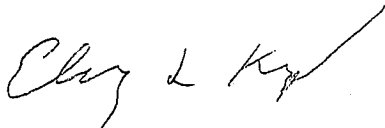
I believe that the draft permit will have negative effects on the emergency response the public expects from fire departments. This unintended affect should be sufficient for the Board to return the permit to its previous wording to (1) remove the specific condition for the treatment of pooled water from a fire emergency, and (2) to allow the occasional discharge of potable water by fire departments when training for emergency response.

The fire departments statewide are charged with protecting the health, safety and welfare of the communities and their citizens. The fire department does not knowingly or willfully pollute the waters of the state or the nation, but when an emergency confronts the fire departments of this state they must be able to attack the emergency with a focus that protects the public and themselves.

Thank you for considering this comment during your deliberations.

Sincerely,

CITY OF SAN MARINO



Elroy L. Kiepke  
NPDES Consultant  
on behalf of Chief John Penido  
San Marino Fire Department