

LAFD Fire Prevention Walk Through and Review of Los Angeles Metro Bus Facilities on 2/4/2021

On Thursday February 4th, LAFD Fire Prevention Bureau (FPB) Inspectors Webb and Martin met with LAPD Sgt. Mike Padilla and members of Los Angeles Metro to walk through two facilities and discuss the homeless encampment issues located around the fenced and walled perimeters.

Metro Bus Yard - 6th and Alameda - Division 1

- 11.5 Acre lot used primarily for Maintenance, Fuel Dispensing, and Housing of Metro Buses.
- A Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) refueling/pipeline facility is located on the property.
- Several clearly marked hazardous material tanks and containers that are properly stored with appropriate NFPA markings and warnings.

Concerns:

1. The CNG is under pressure through a series of piping throughout the property above and underground with an output of 5000 psi. The CNG compressor and tanks are located near the street (6th and Alameda) where the homeless have previously set up encampments and separated by a cinder block wall or chain link fence. The area is clearly marked as dangerous with no smoking signs and NFPA 704 markings with a flammability rating of 4 which is the highest degree of hazard.

2. Large hazardous materials tanks and containers which contain motor oil (1000 gals.), 500 gals. of antifreeze, flammable cleaning solvents (six 275 gal. containers totaling 1,650 gals), are located along the South wall. There are several large homeless tents on the opposite side of this wall known as 1415 - 1463 Industrial Street.

3. There are three very large Eucalyptus trees in need of trimming that overlap the wall from the Industrial Street side into the bus yard and would contribute to a fire exposure problem if a tent fire occurred.

4. The bus vehicles are fueled with CNG. There could be as many as 200 or more buses parked in the lot near the fence perimeter. If one bus is exposed to a tent fire and the CNG starts to heat up, the tanks will relieve the pressure and release the gas which may cause other exposed bus vehicles to do the same once the designated temperature is reached. (See bus fire video).

Metro Bus Yard - 16th and San Pedro St. - Division 2

- 7.5 acre lot used primarily for Maintenance, Fuel Dispensing, and Housing of Metro Buses.
- A Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) refueling/pipeline facility is located on the property.
- Several clearly marked hazardous material tanks and containers on the property that are properly stored with appropriate NFPA markings and warnings.

Concerns:

1. The CNG is under pressure through a series of piping throughout the property above and underground with an output of 5000 psi. The CNG compressor and tanks are located near the street where the homeless have previously set up encampments and separated by a cinder block wall

or chain link fence. The area is clearly marked as dangerous with no smoking signs and NFPA 704 markings with a flammability rating of 4 which is the highest degree of hazard.

2. Large hazardous materials tanks and containers which contain motor oil (1000 gals.), 500 gals. of antifreeze, flammable cleaning solvents, and 500 gals. of antifreeze are located along the North wall. There are several large tents on the opposite side of the wall on 15th Street.

3. On the 16th Street side, there are several Recreational Vehicles (RV) parked within 15 feet of the bus yard. There have been recent RV fires that contributed to a fire exposure problem for the bus vehicles. The Metro employees had to quickly move several bus vehicles on 2/2/2021 due the RV fire.

4. The bus vehicles are fueled with CNG. There could be as many as 200 or more buses parked in the lot near the fence perimeter. If one bus is exposed to a tent or RV fire and the CNG starts to heat up, the fuel tanks will relieve pressure and release the gas which may expose other bus vehicles and cause a domino effect once the designated heat temperature is reached. (See bus fire video and notice the pressure relief of CNG on the roof in video #1 and #2).

Summary:

Since 2017, there have been 20 to 30 homeless tent fires and an unknown number of RV fires exposing all perimeters of the two yards. In addition and according to Metro, the tent occupants toss cigarettes and other items over the fence that land on the flammable piping and hazardous material tanks and containers.

Based on the numerous amount of previous fires, repeated carelessness regarding fire safety by the individuals occupying tents, the potential ignition of stored Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), Hazardous Material Tanks and Containers along with the number of CNG Transit Buses that may be parked/stored all at one time in the yard, there should be conformity of the most restrictive Fire Code Requirements regarding safer distance modifications to homeless tents and RVs and to alleviate future unwanted ignition.

Los Angeles Fire Code Sections - Ignition:

305.5 Unwanted fire ignitions. Acts or processes that have caused repeated ignition of unwanted fires shall be modified to prevent future ignition.

2305.4 Sources of ignition. Smoking and open flames shall be prohibited in areas where fuel is dispensed.

5001.3.3.5 Ignition hazards. Safeguards shall be provided to minimize the risk of exposing combustible hazardous materials to unintended sources of ignition.

5303.7.7 Sources of ignition. Open flames and high-temperature devices shall not be used in a manner that creates a hazardous condition.

CNG Bus Fires

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvuDiZkHJUo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHf2o9oVY24>

A fire/safety tips sheet has been attached below and should be distributed to those who occupy the tents and RVs possibly by Hope Teams and LAHSA.

Respectfully,

Michael P. Webb, Inspector II
Office of the Fire Marshal
Los Angeles City Fire Department
Fire Prevention and Public Safety Bureau
Office: (213) 978-3617

FIRE SAFETY SHEET



Don't Block Fire Department Connections and Hydrants



Consider tent openings

- Don't block others
- Exit to safe area not toward streets or FWY
- Not block exit by fence
- Don't block sidewalk or exit egress



Tents can catch fire very easy. **"DO NOT SMOKE INSIDE TENT"**



"DANGEROUS DO NOT USE" propane inside tent

- For cooking
- Or heating



Never keep open flames inside tent



Hygiene Concerns:

- Clean all wounds
- Do not re-use bandages
- Keep area clean

Small bag for essentials in case you need to go to hospital



- Medicine
- Important belongings



Seek medical attention if wounds are red around cut



Excessive heat exposure can cause sunburn, dehydration and heat stroke



Carry a first-aid kit