

Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board

SITE CLEANUP PROGRAM CASE CLOSURE SUMMARY

Agency Information

Agency Name: Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (Santa Ana Water Board)	Address: 3737 Main Street, Suite 500 Riverside, CA 92501
Agency Caseworker: Gongde Chen	CR Site ID No.: 2080171

Case Information

Site Name: Former Los Angeles Times	Global ID: T10000011210
Site Address: 1375 West Sunflower Avenue Costa Mesa, CA 92526 (Site)	Number of Years Case Open: 9
Responsible Party: The Press Owner, LLC (Press) Attention: Jody Tomlinson	Address: 2300 N Field Street, Suite 1200 Dallas, Texas 75201

GeoTracker Case Record:

https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=T10000011210

Summary

The Site is located within the Coastal Plain of Orange County groundwater basin. The designated beneficial uses for groundwater include municipal and domestic supply, industrial service supply, industrial process supply, and agricultural supply. The underlying soil at the Site is predominantly composed of fine-grained materials, including silty clay, sandy clay, and silty sand. Groundwater in the shallow water-bearing zone was encountered between approximately 9 and 21 feet below ground surface (bgs) and generally flows toward the southwest. The shallow water-bearing zone extends to approximately 40 feet bgs and is underlain by a thick low-permeability zone that separates the shallow groundwater from the deep production aquifer.

The Site occupies approximately 24 acres of land and is composed of three parcels, including Parcel A, Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN): 140-042-16, 140-042-17; Parcel B, APN: 140-042-20; Parcel C, APN: 140-042-07, 140-042-15, and 140-042-16¹. From the late 1960s to 2010, Los Angeles Times occupied Parcel A and Parcel B for printing, fleet refueling, vehicle

¹ [Covenant and Environmental Restriction on Property](#), July 8, 2026

JOHN SCANDURA, CHAIR | ERIC LINDBERG, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

and equipment maintenance operations. Historical storage and use of fuels, petroleum-based inks, and liquid waste resulted in the release of petroleum hydrocarbons and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) into soil and groundwater at the Site.

In 2017, 21 areas of concern (AOCs) were identified in Parcel A and Parcel B, including underground storage tanks (UST) containing waste ink, kerosene, gasoline, and chiller water, clarifiers, sumps, maintenance garages, ink and mechanical pits, railroad spurs, and the former process areas². AOCs associated with petroleum USTs in the western portion of Parcel A and Parcel B were assessed and remediated under the following UST cases:

- [Los Angeles Times – North Tanks](#) (GeoTracker ID No.: T0605901160)
- [Los Angeles Times – South Tanks](#) (GeoTracker ID No.: T0605999595)

Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA) confirmed the completion of remediation and closed the South Tanks case in February 2013 and the North Tanks case in April 2020.

From 2017 through 2025, additional Site investigations were conducted for soil, soil vapor, sub-slab soil vapor, indoor air, and groundwater to evaluate temporal variability and plume stability of contaminants of concern (COCs) in soil vapor and groundwater^{3,4}. From 2017 through 2021, remediation and mitigation actions, including soil excavation, soil vapor extraction, passive sub-slab venting, and floor sealing, were implemented at the Site to clean up and abate the impacted media and mitigate exposure risk³.

Soil

The primary COC in the soil is total petroleum hydrocarbon as diesel (TPH_d). TPH_d was detected at elevated concentrations at depths between 1 and 15 feet bgs in the following locations²:

- Former ink tank farm: 2,800–14,000 milligram per kilogram (mg/kg)
- Northwest maintenance garage: 7,600 mg/kg

In February and March 2018, TPH_d-impacted soil was excavated except for a limited area in the former ink tank farm due to physical constraints from the existing utilities. Verification sampling identified residual TPH_d in soil at depths greater than 8 feet bgs in the former ink tank farm area, including the former clarifier (11,000 mg/kg, 9 feet bgs), former aboveground storage tank pad (14,000 mg/kg, 10–12 feet bgs), and the existing utility trench (2,800 mg/kg, 9 feet bgs)^{2,3}. Petroleum constituents in soil, including benzene, ethylbenzene, and naphthalene, are below the direct exposure and outdoor air exposure concentrations specified in the [Low-Threat Underground Storage Tank Case Closure Policy](#) (LTCP).

Groundwater

The primary COC in groundwater is trichloroethylene (TCE). The impact of TCE to groundwater is localized in the former northeast maintenance garage, power plant, chiller tanks, and pump room beneath and near the connector building in Parcel A². The highest TCE

² Targus Associates, LLC, [Environmental Site Assessment and Conceptual Site Model](#), September 28, 2018

³ Targus Associates, LLC, [Request for Closure](#), April 11, 2025

⁴ Targus Associates, LLC, [Groundwater Sampling and Analysis Report](#), December 12, 2025

concentration of 730 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$) was detected in a grab groundwater sample from soil boring C-6. Subsequent groundwater monitoring at GW-6V and GW-7V adjacent to C-6 found that TCE concentrations varied between 5 and 68 $\mu\text{g/L}$, which exceeds the State Water Resources Control Board drinking water maximum contaminant level of 5 $\mu\text{g/L}$. Soil sampling in the groundwater-impacted area did not identify a secondary source of TCE in the vadose zone. Groundwater monitoring data collected between 2017 and 2025 from down- and cross-gradient monitoring wells, decades of groundwater data from the downgradient North Tanks UST case, and water quality data from the adjacent Costa Mesa supply wells (Wells No. 6, No. 7, No. 9B, and No. 11) located within a one-mile radius of the Site demonstrate that groundwater impacts are confined to the uppermost water-bearing zone without evidence of lateral and vertical migration.³

TPH_d was detected at an elevated concentration of 13,000 $\mu\text{g/L}$ in groundwater in the former ink tank farm area where soil was impacted by TPH_d. Petroleum VOCs, including benzene and methyl-tert-butyl ether (MTBE), were below the groundwater-specific criteria specified in the LTCP. Groundwater data from the downgradient wells indicates that residual TPH_d is localized to the former ink tank farm area without evidence of migration.

Soil Vapor, Sub-slab Soil Vapor, and Indoor Air

Tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and TCE are the primary COCs in soil vapor at depths between 3 and 14 feet bgs that exceed the 2025 commercial/industrial environmental screening levels (ESLs)⁵. The soil vapor impact was mainly identified in the former northeast maintenance garage, power plant, chiller tanks, and pump room beneath the connector building in Parcel A^{2,6}. The maximum soil vapor concentrations were 9,200 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for PCE at 7 feet bgs and 27,000 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for TCE at 10 feet bgs. In addition to PCE and TCE, benzene was detected in sub-slab soil vapor. The maximum sub-slab soil vapor concentrations are 2,300 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for PCE, 1,900 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for TCE, and 6,000 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for benzene.

In August 2018, a 20-hour soil vapor extraction (SVE) pilot test was conducted in the soil vapor impacted area and a limited amount of VOCs was extracted. The post-SVE maximum soil vapor concentrations were reduced to 2,200 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for PCE and 2,700 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for TCE. The post-SVE sub-slab soil vapor concentrations of PCE and TCE remained largely unchanged, however, benzene was not detected.

In 2019, a passive sub-slab venting system was installed beneath the connector building where PCE and TCE were elevated in soil vapor and TCE was elevated in groundwater⁷. In February 2021, sub-slab soil vapor samples were collected from 20 sub-slab vapor pins. Only PCE and TCE concentrations exceeded the 2025 commercial/industrial ESLs. The maximum sub-slab soil vapor concentrations were 401 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for PCE and 421 $\mu\text{g/m}^3$ for TCE. The sub-slab soil vapor data from 2018 to 2021 shows a decreasing trend for PCE and TCE⁸.

In April 2021, an epoxy resin sealant was applied to the floor of the connector building. In April and November 2021, two rounds of indoor air samples were collected from five locations within

⁵ San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, [2025 Environmental Screening Level Summary Tables - Revision 4](#), January 20, 2026

⁶ Targus Associates, LLC, [Subslab Confirmation Sampling](#), January 10, 2025

⁷ Targus Associates, LLC, [Sub-slab Ventilation System Installation Progress Summary](#), September 6, 2019

⁸ Targus Associates, LLC, [Sub-Slab Vapor Sampling and Analysis](#), April 7, 2021

the connector building when the ventilation system was in operation. The indoor air concentrations were below the 2025 commercial/industrial ESLs⁹.

Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA)

In April 2023, Geosyntec Consultants, Inc. (Geosyntec), on behalf of the Press, submitted a Vapor Intrusion HHRA report for the soil vapor impacted area beneath the connector building¹⁰. Geosyntec derived a 95th percentile Site-specific attenuation factor (AF) of 0.004 based on indoor air and sub-slab soil vapor data. In May 2023, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) reviewed the HHRA report. Based on the indoor air data, OEHHA estimated that the cumulative cancer risk was below 1E-6 (one in a million) and noncancer hazard index was less than 1 for commercial/industrial workers¹¹. OEHHA concurred with Geosyntec's risk calculation using sub-slab soil vapor data and the Site-specific AF and confirmed that the cumulative cancer risk was below 1E-6 and noncancer hazard index was below 1 for commercial/industrial workers. Using the United States Environmental Protection Agency AF of 0.03, OEHHA estimated the cumulative cancer risk was below 1E-5, and noncancer hazard index was below 1 for commercial/industrial workers. OEHHA also conducted risk estimates for trench construction workers in a hypothetical situation where the foundation of the building was removed, and construction work was being performed in a trench within the footprint of the soil vapor-impacted area. The estimated cumulative cancer risk is below 1 and noncancer hazard index varies between 1.7 and 41, depending on the air-filled porosity and water-filled porosity values used in the trench model.

Land Use Covenant

Since the residual TPH_d and VOCs in soil, soil vapor, and groundwater do not support unrestricted use of the Site, a land use Covenant and Environmental Restriction (LUC) on the Property was recorded with the Orange County Clerk Recorder on July 8, 2026¹. The LUC describes specific restrictions and provisions that are intended to control exposure to and prevent mobilization of residual TPH_d and VOCs in soil, soil vapor, and groundwater at the Site. Specific restrictions in the LUC include, but are not limited to, the following:

- No excavation for the VOC-impacted area beneath the connector building and no excavation below a depth of 3 feet for Parcel A without written authorization from the Santa Ana Water Board.
- No groundwater extraction for beneficial uses.
- Land uses restricted to industrial, commercial, or office space.
- No disturbance of the passive venting system.
- A proposed vapor intrusion mitigation system for new construction needs to be reviewed and inspected by the Santa Ana Water Board.
- No aggravation or contribution to the existing residual contamination in soil, soil vapor, and groundwater.

⁹ Targus Associates, LLC, [Indoor Air Quality Protectiveness Confirmation](#), February 2, 2022

¹⁰ Geosyntec, [Vapor Intrusion Human Health Risk Assessment](#), April 11, 2023

¹¹ Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, [Review of Vapor Intrusion Human Health Risk Assessment](#), May 25, 2023

Rationale for Closure

On April 11, 2025, an updated Conceptual Site Model (CSM), including Site history, Site geology and hydrogeology, Site contamination assessment, remediation, mitigation, plume stability, exposure pathways, potential receptors and HHRA, was presented in the *Request for Closure* letter³. Based on the available soil data to date, direct exposure to residual TPH_d is incomplete for commercial/industrial workers at the Site because the impacted soil is at depths of more than 8 feet bgs, and the impacted area is capped with hard pavement and building foundation. Petroleum constituents, including benzene, ethylbenzene, naphthalene, meet the general and specific criteria for the commercial/industrial scenario in the LTCP. Therefore, the residual TPH_d in soil does not appear to pose an unacceptable risk for commercial/industrial workers at the Site. However, residual TPH_d may be encountered in Parcel A during grading, excavation, trenching, or backfilling work for Site redevelopment in the future. In April 2026, a *Soil Management and Health and Safety Plan* (SMP) was developed for future soil disturbance activities in the soil-impacted areas at the Site.¹² The LUC requires prior authorization for conducting excavations and soil management activities in accordance with the SMP and all applicable provisions of local, State, and Federal laws and regulations. Based on the engineering controls in the SMP and institutional control in the LUC, residual contamination in soil does not appear to pose an unacceptable risk for construction workers.

Based on the available groundwater data to date, the impact of TCE to groundwater is localized in the uppermost water-bearing zone beneath the connector building in Parcel A, the TCE groundwater plume is decreasing, and the water quality objective can be achieved in a reasonable timeframe. Additionally, the LUC prohibits the extraction of groundwater for use at the Site, which prevents the migration of TCE from the impacted area and direct exposure to TCE-impacted water. Residual TPH_d in groundwater is localized to the former ink tank farm area and the petroleum VOCs were not detected in groundwater. Therefore, residual TCE in groundwater does not appear to pose an unacceptable risk to groundwater resources or human health, and petroleum constituents meet the general and specific criteria in the LTCP.

Based on the available soil vapor and sub-slab soil vapor data to date, the impact of PCE and TCE is localized beneath the connector building, and sub-slab soil vapor concentrations are decreasing. A passive venting system was installed in the soil vapor impacted area to mitigate potential vapor intrusion. The LUC restricts the disturbance of the existing passive venting system and requires installation of an equivalent vapor intrusion mitigation system for new construction in the soil vapor impacted area in the future. The HHRA based on indoor air and sub-slab soil vapor data shows that residual VOCs in subsurface soil vapor do not appear to pose an unacceptable risk to current and future Site building occupants.

Recommendation for Closure

The investigation, remediation, mitigation measures, and institutional control implemented at this Site ensure the protection of human health, safety, and the environment and are consistent with the State Water Resources Control Board Resolution No. 92-49, implementing regulations, applicable state policies for water quality control and applicable water quality control plans. Under the condition that the data and information provided to us was accurate and representative of the existing conditions at the Site, case closure is recommended.

¹² Targus Associates, LLC, [Soil Management and Health and Safety Plan](#), April 3, 2026

Well Abandonment and Waste Removal Requirements

Should the 30-day public notification period lapse with no objections to the recommended Site closure, the Santa Ana Water Board will issue a directive to abandon all the existing wells and borings and remove all the waste piles, drums, debris, and other materials associated with the investigation and remediation activities. A draft closure directive that describes the proposed well abandonment and waste removal requirements has been prepared for public notification.

Prepared by:

Gongde Chen



Digitally signed by Gongde Chen
Date: 2026.10.14 20:35:17 -07'00'

Gongde Chen, PhD, P.E.
Water Resources Control Engineer

Date

Reviewed By:

Jessica Law



Digitally signed by Jessica Law
Date: 2026.10.15 07:26:16 -07'00'

Jessica Law, P.G.
Senior Engineering Geologist

Date