

# Doctors Sound Alarm as State of Emergency Declared over CA Gas Leak: Leave Now

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### Claire Bernish

**(ANTIMEDIA)** Los Angeles, CA — California Governor Jerry Brown finally declared a [state of emergency](#) on Wednesday, concerning the ongoing, currently [unstoppable](#) methane gas leak [spewing](#) from Aliso Canyon that has created a nightmare for residents of Porter Ranch.

*"I will tell you, this goes well beyond Porter Ranch. We've had complaints from as far as Chatsworth, Northridge, and Granada Hills," emphasized* Los Angeles City Councilman Mitchell Englander during a Porter Ranch town hall meeting on December 28. *"Apparently this plume of toxic chemicals and whatever it might be, doesn't know zip codes [...] This is the equivalent of the BP oil spill on land, in a populated community."*

Aliso Canyon sits less than two and a half miles from Porter Ranch and less than 30 miles from the city of Los Angeles — the second most populous city in the United States — whose outlying total statistical area [includes](#) nearly *18 million* residents, as of 2013.

Brown has been widely criticized for lack of decisive action on the leak, which is erupting from its underground storage area with all the [force](#) "of a volcano." Under Wednesday's [declaration](#), *"all state agencies will utilize state personnel, equipment, and facilities to ensure a continuous and thorough state response to this incident."* Porter Ranch residents have been evacuating the area for some time, though SoCalGas' rather maladroit handling of the relocation procedure has been a nightmare — and the cause for a mounting [number](#) of [lawsuits](#), including one from the L.A. city attorney's office.

Los Angeles City Attorney Mike Feuer [filed a civil lawsuit](#) last month concerning the massive methane leak's [impact](#) on area residents' health and damage to the environment — which alleged failure by SoCalGas to prevent the leak and further exacerbation of *"the effects of that failure by allowing acute odor and health problems faced by the community to persist for more than a month, to say nothing about the indefinite time it will persist into the future."*

Pediatrician Dr. Richard Kang gave an ominous [warning](#) during the Porter Ranch meeting, saying, *"Unfortunately, the only real way to get away from the symptoms is... you have to relocate — you have to get away from the environment."* Health complaints include severe headaches, nosebleeds, respiratory issues including increasing cases of asthma, and a number of other issues.

SoCalGas, in the meantime, [stated](#) they were *"providing air filters for people's homes,"* but though *"the odor added to the leaking gas can cause symptoms for some, the gas is not toxic and county health officials have said the leak does not pose a long-term health risk."*

But, as the *Los Angeles Daily News* [reported](#) on December 25, *"Los Angeles County health officials said prolonged exposure to trace chemicals, some of which are known carcinogens, can cause long-term health effects."* Nevertheless, they also *"cautioned that levels examined so far here are not believed to be associated with long-term health problems."*

*"The gas company says, 'This is just the smell you're reacting to, it's just temporary, it's not a problem, it's not serious' — these people aren't stupid,"* said attorney Rex Paris. *"How could somebody possibly say that? We have children whose noses are bleeding every day, we have people who suffer from chronic headaches [and] are nauseous every, single day. How does that not become a serious issue? Why are they saying something nobody here believes? [...] They're trying to convince everybody that it's all in our heads. It's a trick."*

In fact, as Erin Brockovich [pointed out](#), *"no one really knows the long-term side effects of benzene and radon, the carcinogens that are commonly found in natural gas."* Additionally, area house pets seem particularly vulnerable — possibly acting the part of unwitting canaries — as veterinarian Dr. David Smith described in the town hall meeting. Noting he has seen dozens of sickened animals, Smith said, *"I've seen dogs, cats, birds, pocket pets... the primary symptoms I've seen are gastrointestinal vomiting [...] These are not things you should be inhaling."* He added, *"We have seen dermatological issues as well, some very unusual bacterial infections in dogs,"* including one case in which a dog had such an infection on its face, and *"the client developed almost the exact same kind of symptoms soon after that [...] their physician thinks it's related [to exposure from the gas leak] and so I tend to think these correlations are real."*

Though the declaration of emergency states *"the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources shall continue its prohibition against Southern California Gas Company injecting any gas into the Aliso Canyon Storage Facility,"* it does not make that moratorium dependent on **stoppage of the leak**; rather, only *"until a comprehensive review, utilizing independent experts [...] is completed."*

Physician Dr. Brooks Michaels, addressing the town hall meeting, gave the sternest advice to those still in the area surrounding the unprecedented leak: *"If you have a chance to leave, if you're able to leave... if you have a chance to relocate, do it now. I'm telling you, it's really critical."*

Understandably, Brown's state of emergency seems almost too little, too late for many.

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Claire Bernish joined Anti-Media as an independent journalist in May of 2015. Her topics of interest include thwarting war propaganda through education, the refugee crisis & related issues, 1st Amendment concerns, ending police brutality, and general government & corporate accountability. Born in North Carolina, she now lives in Cincinnati, Ohio.