

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Industrial Fire in Barrio Logan Endangers Health, Safety of Residents**

*Environmental Health Coalition says fire fits into dangerous statewide trend of scrap metal explosions*

SAN DIEGO – July 23, 2015 – When a recycling plant burst into flames late last night, residents in Barrio Logan slept in their beds about 30 feet away. Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) says the fire fits into a dangerous pattern of scrap metal facility fires seen in California, providing one more illustration for the need to separate industrial business from residential homes in San Diego’s urban communities.

“This terrible news brings to light one of our worst fears for community members in Barrio Logan, who already suffer every day from lingering toxic air and chemical pollution in their neighborhood,” says EHC Executive Director Diane Takvorian. “It is more than troubling that SA Recycling contributed \$50,000 to the fight against the Barrio Logan community plan update, which would have eventually protected residents from exposure to explosion hazards like last night’s fire.”

According to the Los Angeles Times, fires and explosions at scrap metal facilities remain a common occurrence in California. The outlet reports nearly two-dozen fires statewide required dozens of medical treatments for burns, poisonous gas exposure or smoke inhalation.

Metal scrap managed at plants such as SA Recycling, located at 1211 S. 32<sup>nd</sup> Street in Barrio Logan and where this morning’s fire occurred, often contains toxic materials, such as lead acid batteries, diesel fuel and metals such as nickel, zinc and copper. Car scrap may contain plastics, fuel and oil; all flammable substances that contribute to the toxicity of black smoke generated by fire. A search of hazardous materials and waste records from SA Recycling found that, as of 2012, toxic materials on site include mercury wastes, PCBs, lead acid batteries, gasoline, diesel and organic liquids with metals.

“I know there’s hazardous waste stored on site there, and I was preparing to evacuate when I saw the flames,” says Barrio Logan resident Robert Pipes, whose home faces SA Recycling from directly across the street. “It shocked me to see the business fully operational this morning as if nothing had happened – as if they hadn’t just endangered my neighborhood and my family.”

One year ago, EHC spearheaded the “Yes on B & C” campaign to update the Barrio Logan community plan and protect the health of children and families living in the neighborhood. Adopted by the San Diego City Council but challenged through a referendum by local industries, the Barrio Logan community plan update would have separated industrial establishments and residential neighborhoods in the interest of breathable air and healthy communities. Today, Barrio Logan remains a neighborhood operating under a community plan from 1978.

Environmental Health Coalition expresses its concern for residents near the fire and continues to advocate for long-overdue environmental justice in Barrio Logan.

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION: Founded in 1980, Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) builds grassroots campaigns to confront the unjust consequences of toxic pollution, discriminatory land use and unsustainable energy policies. Visit us online at <http://www.environmentalhealth.org>.