



Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR  
January 24, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: Disaster & Fire Safety Commission  
 Submitted by: Robert Flasher, Chairperson, Disaster and Fire Safety Commission  
 Subject: Referral from City Council on Emergency Cache Gas Generators for Measure GG Funding

RECOMMENDATION

Do not replacing existing disaster cache generators with new propane generators because propane generators are currently being provided in new disaster caches and because of lack of available funding and staff time. The Commission will reconsider in the FY18/19 budget cycle.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

None at this time.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

When caches were originally issued, they included gas generators. Gasoline goes bad when stored for prolonged periods. Propane is more stable and will enable the generators to start in an emergency. This will enable neighborhoods to preserve medications that must remain refrigerated, run lights, and operate communications.

At the October 26, 2016 regular meeting of the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission, the commission passed the following motion:

Motion to recommend not replacing existing disaster cache generators with new propane generators because propane generators are currently being provided in new disaster caches and because of lack of available funding and staff time. The Commission will reconsider in the FY18/19 budget cycle: R. Grimes, Second: C. Smukler

Vote: (5 Ayes: Grimes, Golomb, Smukler, Couzin, Flasher; 0 Noes; 3 Absent: Jones, Degenkolb, King; 1 Abstain: Legg)

BACKGROUND

There are over 100 caches in Berkeley. The neighborhoods with caches are encouraged to start their generators once a month to ensure that they remain in running

condition. We are afraid that this isn't occurring with many of the groups. And even if it is taking place, the gasoline being saved will go bad within a year. Cache neighborhoods have been reminded to start their generators once a month and to replace the gas at least twice per year.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Propane and gasoline are both petrochemical products and harm the environment. Aside from brief testing periods once a month, the generators will only be used in emergencies when there is an interruption to the electricity grid, which occurs infrequently.

#### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

We need generators that will work in emergencies. Propane ones are way more dependable. This is why propane generators have been included in disaster caches awarded by the city since 2014. The staff's budget projections for Measure GG expenditures indicate a shortfall in coming years. As a result, the commission cannot recommend replacing gas generators at this time but will revisit the proposal to replace existing gasoline generators in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

#### ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

1. No action.
2. Emergency preparedness groups that have caches could be reminded to test start the generators once per month, empty the gas tanks after each use and replace their stored gasoline every 6 months.
3. We could retrofit the current generators for propane (at costs that are above replacement costs due to labor required) and without any guarantees that the retrofits would work well.
4. We could direct staff to develop an incentive program encouraging existing cache groups to invest in propane generators in the future, when that effort can hopefully be supported by Measure GG Funds.

#### CITY MANAGER

The City Manager concurs with the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

#### CONTACT PERSON

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