

# Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors*

*representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar*

PO Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0248 | [midcoastcommunitycouncil.org](http://midcoastcommunitycouncil.org)

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Chair Vice-Chair Treasurer Secretary

Date: May 25, 2022  
To: San Mateo County Board of Supervisors  
Cc: Gretchen Kelly, Manager, County of San Mateo Airports  
Ann M. Stillman, Interim Director of Public Works  
From: Midcoast Community Council  
Subject: Request for reduction and eventual elimination of leaded aviation fuel at HMB Airport

We appreciate the Department of Public Works taking the time to [respond](#) to the [MCC letter](#) on lead exposure as a result of Half Moon Bay Airport operations, but the response did not address the concerns in a meaningful manner.

It is a fact that airborne lead emissions are occurring from flight operations in and around the Half Moon Bay Airport. Leaded aviation fuel sold at the airport is emitted during LTO (Landing and Takeoff) operations at the rate of 151 kilograms (333 pounds) per year based on a [2008 study](#) by the Environmental Protection Agency. While lead has been banned in paint since 1978 and in cars in California since 1992, it continues to be used in airplanes, which accounts for [70% of the lead](#) entering the atmosphere today.

The study of leaded aviation gas exposure risk at Reid-Hillview Airport in Santa Clara County [statistically linked](#) ongoing use of leaded aviation gas with elevated lead exposure for children living near that airport. Children living closest to the airport had higher levels of lead in their blood than those who lived farther away, even after accounting for emissions from other sources including lead-based paint. Based on these data, we can conclude that people living near the Half Moon Bay Airport are being exposed to lead from aviation fuel, which obviates the need for a study specific to our area. Therefore, the MCC rescinds its request for a study of blood lead levels.

The Federal Aviation Administration, recognizing the harmful effects of lead, has charted a path to eliminate lead emissions from general aviation by 2030, but San Mateo County needs to move faster.

San Carlos Airport was the first in California to sell unleaded aviation fuel in 2014, so why has it taken so long to offer unleaded fuel at Half Moon Bay Airport?

We understand from Gretchen Kelly that the Airport has requested Measure K funding to install an unleaded aviation fuel tank at the Half Moon Bay Airport, and we celebrate this decision. However, we ask that swift action be taken to approve this expenditure prior to the September budget revisions, so that construction can begin and pilots have an unleaded fuel option at the Half Moon Bay Airport as soon as possible.

We also ask that San Mateo County continue to work to reduce activities at the airport that emit significant amounts of lead such as repeated touch-and-go operations.

San Mateo County should join Santa Clara County at the forefront of the move to eliminate leaded fuel, and should not wait for the federal government to take action. Santa Clara County stopped selling leaded aviation fuel at its airports on January 1, 2022, and San Mateo should do the same.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our request to test the soil on and around the airport for lead contamination. Though we appreciate the stormwater runoff testing initiated as a result of our original letter, it is potentially an unreliable means of detection due to the effects of dilution. The County leases this land to farmers who grow vegetables in the soil, and the public deserves to know about potential contaminants in the food that is grown and consumed.

Thank you for taking our concerns seriously. We appreciate the opportunity to partner to make our area safer for current and future generations.

s/Claire Toutant, Chair