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SPECIAL HEARING

2/3/05

cc: BD, DI, DWQ

E-cys: BD, CC HMS, TH, CMW

ALL

MEMORIAL PLAQUES AND TABLETS
WOOD AND ALUMINUM PATTERNS

Members of the Board:

My name is Eric Johnson and I would like to speak to you today as the owner of a small non-ferrous foundry that has operated in California for the past seventy years.

For those of you that are not familiar with foundries we are one of the oldest trades in existence as we can trace our history back more than 4,000 years. Each day all of us, whether we know it or not, uses something that has a casting that was produced by a foundry.

The foundry trade in Northern California employs many people and most of our workers belong to a Union. We have always been a trade that has employed many of the new legal arrivals to our county and state. When these workers go to work for us they receive a rate of pay far above the current minimum wage. In addition, they receive many benefits such as full health coverage for not only themselves, but also for the members of their family. We feel we are part of the story that allows Americans to better themselves and we must be doing something right as the employees in my operation have been with us for an average of 25 years.

During our operation we have joined various groups particular to the foundry industry including the California Cast Metals Association. This membership has been very beneficial to us as it has allowed us, as small as we are, to keep current with what we are required to do to keep pace with current rules. Because of our membership we became immediately aware of our responsibility in 1991-92 to prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and to do the required testing. We formed a group of 63 foundries and with the help of very knowledgeable people set up a proper plan to meet all requirements. We have done all that was required over the past twelve years.

In the past twelve years our group has dropped to forty-three members. Some of the shops that are no longer with us just left the state to areas that appreciate what industry has meant to this country and one such company now calls itself EXCAL. Others, tired of fighting with ever changing regulations and the costs of implementing them, have said enough is enough and just gone out of business. Much business that has left California and has gone to countries that have none, or very little, environmental controls. In California when our air quality goes above 100 we start to worry. One of my fellow foundry owners recently visited a city in China and had an opportunity to visit a foundry. Because of the lack of any environmental controls on all industries in this city, the air quality never fell below 350.

You now have before you a whole new set of rules that will make it even tougher to survive in California. It is my understanding that some of the limits on items we are required to test for have no basis of science to back them up. I would ask this Board to test the chain link fences that surround many places, particularly schools, and you would find that the storm water coming in contact with those fences will result in levels exceeding the required levels for Zinc. I guess I should be sorry for mentioning this as I do understand that it is only us select few that have to meet the requirements as set forth in the rules we are discussing. If we must reach what I consider unattainable levels, particularly for Zinc, many more shops like mine will close their doors for the final time. It has been estimated that it would cost a small operation like mine some \$8,000-\$10,000 per year for the additional required testing. This outlay of capital is on top of what we already must spend to keep ourselves in compliance and doesn't even consider all the extra time that would be required to do the extra sampling and paper work.

It is my belief that this state has forgotten what has made us the greatest state in the Union. We have forgotten that in our world we must have businesses that actually produce something and not a business that services others. Nobody advocates returning to the era when we, as a nation, were polluting ourselves on every level. However, there is a point at which we must stop and examine the rules to see if they are justified. I believe we have reached that point and it is my fear that the rules, as proposed, will only see financial hardship placed on industry who are already meeting the requirements for storm water.

I sincerely thank you for the opportunity of presenting some of my brief thoughts on the matter before this Board and I can only urge you to listen to our pleas.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Johnson", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Eric Johnson
Valley Pattern & Mfg., Inc.