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Statement to the Press

Methodist Hospital Requests Exemption from EAA Rules

Methodist Hospital representatives appeared before the Aquifer Management and Planning Committee of the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) requesting exemption from EAA rules that prohibit large fuel storage tanks (greater than 600 gallons) on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. The EAA prohibits construction of large underground or above ground storage tanks on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. The item up for consideration by the Committee was a proposed exemption for hospitals to the current rules prohibiting fuel storage in excess of 600 gallons on the Edwards Recharge Zone. Methodist Hospital wants to install a 4,400 gallon above ground diesel tank to run their emergency generators.

The Methodist Hospital Systems has already begun construction on a new hospital, Methodist Stone Oak Hospital, located on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. It was brought to their attention that their plans did not comply with EAA rules when they submitted their Water Pollution Abatement Plan to Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ), as required by state law. The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance wants to know why they were permitted to begin construction when their plans are in violation of EAA regulations.

The hotel at PGA Village has also expressed an interest in obtaining a variance from this same rule. Both the hospital and the hotel are required by law to have back up generators. Neither the hospital nor the hotel want to use generators powered by alternate fuels such as propane or natural gas, which would pose less of a risk to the Edwards Aquifer.

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance is very concerned that creating variances and exemptions from the first of the rules passed to protect our water supply will inhibit the Authority's ability to enforce these rules in a uniform manner in the future. Prohibitions against hazardous materials are critical to protecting this resource upon which 1.7 million people rely as their primary source of potable water. Methodist Ministries and the PGA hotel should be directed to find a way to comply with current regulations.

An item exempting hospitals on the Recharge Zone from prohibitions on large fuel storage tanks will be considered by the Board of the EAA at their next meeting at 3:00 p.m. on May 8th at 1615 N. St. Mary's Street in San Antonio, Texas.

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance urges citizens to contact their elected representatives of the Edwards Aquifer Authority to ask them to deny this, and all other variances and exemptions from the regulations that protect our water supply. The burden to our community should a spill occur far outweighs the benefits of saving the Methodist Hospital the money required to comply with current law.

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance (GEAA) unites thirty-nine diverse member groups throughout Central and South Texas behind a comprehensive plan to protect the Edwards Aquifer, its adjoining aquifers, springs and contributing watersheds within twenty-one counties of the Texas Hill Country.