



Richard Bangert

The massive Building 5 sprawls out over Alameda Point on the left. The Naval Air Rework Facility, employed 7,135 civilians who started with propeller-driven planes and eventually transitioned to jet engine aircraft. This facility was closed in 1993, four years before the rest of the base.

## Solvent Cleanup Completed at Point

Richard Bangert

A liquid solvent that is able to dissolve other substances can run, but it can't hide from investigators, even 20 feet below ground. A toxic cleaning solvent called trichloroethane (TCE) was used to degrease metal parts in industrial operations at the Navy's aircraft repair facility. When this solvent leaks into soil and groundwater, as it did in Building 5 at Alameda Point, the odorless vapors can cause cancer and other ill health effects to occupants of buildings above as it evaporates.

The actual process of cleaning up the contamination, while time-consuming, is not the real problem. The real challenge is finding it, measuring it, and calculating what the safe cleanup level is for future use of the building, in this case commercial.

The Navy has spent some 30 years, starting before the base closed, mapping the geology and groundwater flow, drilling wells, taking water samples, plotting the extent of contamination, creating

3-D models of the contamination, creating health risk models, and employing a variety of cleanup methods. In November 2020, the Navy reported that the air quality in Building 5, covering almost a million square feet, is now safe for future workers.

The cleanup process has employed three methods of removing the solvent. First, an isolated pocket of liquid solvent was pumped out. Second, both steam and high voltage electrodes in the ground were used to vaporize the bulk of the solvent and vacuum it out. The third method, called chemical oxidation, involves injecting chemicals to break down the remaining area of elevated solvent into harmless substances.

It is worth noting that the other common method of treating trichloroethane contamination, using bacteria, also known as bioremediation, produces the exact same harmless breakdown compounds as the chemical oxidation process. But that process, which is being used on a large solvent contamina-

tion area south of Alameda Point's Site A new development, is much slower.

The reason the faster chemical-oxidation process was ruled out for that site is because there are numerous utility pipes for electrical, gas, water and sewer that crisscross the cleanup site. Injected cleanup chemicals would end up being diverted when they hit the various pipes and frustrate the even distribution of the cleanup chemicals. Bacteria, on the other hand, is already there and can spread on its own after injecting food sources like lactose and veggie oil, which the Navy has done.

While it took a long time for chemists to come up with the sophisticated three-chemical cleanup mixture used at Building 5, the chemicals themselves are surprisingly familiar names. Hydrogen peroxide is common in most medicine cabinets for topical use on skin. Sodium persulfate is common at pool supply stores for use as a pool

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## Lighting the Way in a Crucial Time



Chabad of Alameda Rabbi Meir Shmotkin Chabad of Alameda lit a public 9-foot Hanukkah menorah at Alameda Point last Sunday, the fourth night of the eight-day holiday. While the scope of the ceremony was limited to a drive-in only event amid Alameda's ongoing coronavirus emergency, the lights shone forth as brightly as ever. This year's menorah lighting was done with the recognition of the crucial need for a message of hope during what for many is a very difficult time.

## Light at End of Tunnel

Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft

On Dec. 7, Alameda County joined the State's Regional Stay at Home order which includes closing outdoor dining at restaurants and limiting stores to 20% customer capacity, in order to minimize our interactions with people from other households to:

- Stop rising COVID-19 transmission rates
- Protect our regional health care system
- Prevent severe disease and loss of life

The order will remain in place until Jan. 4, 2021 (covid-19.acgov.org/sip).

We're all experiencing "pandemic fatigue" and we're weary of living with these restrictions. But Alameda County took the proactive step of adopting the order before we reached the State threshold of less than 15% intensive care unit (ICU) bed capacity because county public health officials observed key metrics worsening too quickly to wait to adopt the order.

These metrics include increased daily case rates, hospital admissions, and deaths. For more information, please visit covid-19.acgov.org/data.

Please stay home as much as possible to protect yourself and others. Wear a mask when you leave home, stay 6 feet away from anyone who doesn't live in your household, and wash hands frequently.

Take care of your mental health, too. Spend at least 30 minutes outside each day getting exercise, fresh air, and a new perspective. Find socially distanced ways to connect with others.

Seek assistance if you feel overwhelmed or "not yourself." (Resources available at Alameda Family Services www.alamedafamily.org and Alameda County Behavioral Health Services www.acbhcs.org.)

And hope is on the way! If two-thirds of the American public receive the COVID-19 vaccine, "life could get back to normal" by this fall, according to Dr. Paul Offit (National Public Radio interview on Dec. 11). Dr. Offit, a pediatric vaccine specialist from Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, is a member of the panel advising the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on COVID-19 vaccines.

Last week, the FDA issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the vaccine manufactured by Pfizer and BioNTech, and the first batches of this vaccine are now being distributed nationwide. This week, the FDA will consider issuing an EUA for the Moderna vaccine.

Also this week, Alameda County receives its first allotment of Pfizer vaccines — 13,650 doses — followed by doses of the Moderna vac-

cine, assuming an FDA EUA. Eileen Ng, a Policy Director with Alameda County Health Care Services Agency was my guest at last week's Mayor's Town Hall (www.youtube.com/cityofalameda) where she explained that vaccinations will be administered in four phases.

**Phase 1:** Extending through December and January, will begin with healthcare workers who care for critically ill COVID-19 patients, and first responders, followed by people with underlying medical conditions that put them at greater risk if they contract COVID-19, as well as older adults living in congregate settings such as nursing homes.

**Phase 2:** This phase is anticipated to begin in March or April and include K-12 teachers, school staff and childcare workers; critical workers in industries essential to the functioning of society who are at high risk of exposure; people at moderate risk from COVID-19 complications; individuals who live or work in homeless shelters, group homes, prisons, jails and detention centers; and older adults not included in Phase 1.

**Phase 3** is expected to occur this summer and will include young adults, children, and workers in industries and occupations important to the functioning of society and at increased risk of exposure who aren't included in Phases 1 or 2.

**Phase 4** is estimated to take place toward the end of 2021 and include all U.S. residents who haven't yet received a COVID-19 vaccine.

The City will work with Alameda County to inform residents of COVID-19 vaccination locations and procedures as we begin this important path back to normalcy. However, until a substantial majority of the population is vaccinated, we must continue to follow the essential guidelines of mask wearing, six feet distancing, and frequent hand washing.

Let there be light! This week I had the privilege of lighting the "shamash" candle of the Menorah at Chabad Alameda's socially distanced "drive-in" Chanukah Menorah Lighting at Alameda Point. Also this month, many celebrate Christmas.

And across our city, homes are decorated with lights. The symbolism of these winter holidays — the triumph of light over darkness — is especially meaningful this year. May the lights of this holiday season shine light into the darkness and usher in a bright future full of hope for you and your families, our community, and the world.

Happy holidays, Alameda! Take care and stay safe. We're Alameda Strong!

Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft is the Mayor of Alameda.

## Council Set to Extend Rent Freeze

Sun Staff Reports

At its Tuesday, Dec. 15 meeting, the City Council considered an ordinance that would extend the rent freeze for fully regulated residential units through June 30, 2021.

"Alameda renters continue to suffer significant financial impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, whether directly or indirectly," city staff stated in its report about the rent freeze.

The city sees no end in sight for renters seeking relief and considers rent increases during the COVID-19 health pandemic a threat to the public health, safety and welfare of

Alameda tenants, including seniors, those on fixed incomes, households with very low, low and moderate incomes and people with special needs.

Staff informed the Council that "without a freeze on rent increases through next June 30, tenants may be forced to choose between paying rent and providing food, clothing, medical care or child care for themselves and their families.

Tenants are being directed to shelter in place. This makes it difficult and threatens a household's well-being.

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## Prolific Architect

Google

Architect Charles Shaner teamed up with builder David Brehaut to create what Alameda Museum Curator George Gunn calls an "architectural tour-de-force." The pair presented the home at Willow Street and San Jose Avenue (left) as a salesman's sample to showcase their skills to prospective customers. Shaner designed and built his own home on Broadway and two for a railroad executive right next door. Read more about Shaner on page 10.

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