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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT JOINS CITY OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS IN LITTLE VILLAGE FOLLOWING DEMOLITION

City takes immediate actions to investigate a weekend demolition event; commits to creating and enforcing stronger operating procedures

CHICAGO — Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today joined 22nd Ward Alderman Michael Rodriguez, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady and Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Buildings Judith Frydland to announce plans to hold Hilco Redevelopment Partners accountable for excessive dust caused by the scheduled implosion of a smokestack located on the grounds of the former Crawford Power Generating Station, which caused dust to blanket the surrounding Little Village community.

Upon learning of this event, Mayor Lightfoot immediately took several actions, including: issuing a stop-work order at the site effective immediately and pending the outcome of a full review of the event; investigation into the city's regulatory approval process, and a directive to Hilco to conduct a full clean-up and removal of dust in the surrounding neighborhood. These actions are geared toward remediating the impact of Saturday's event, and preventing a similar event in the future.

"What happened yesterday was utterly unacceptable and the City of Chicago will never hesitate to enforce its environmental safety regulations to the fullest extent possible when encountering violations like these, big or small," said Mayor Lightfoot. "My team has already begun the process of working with the Little Village community to remediate the situation, including conducting a thorough review of what took place and strengthening our protocols to ensure incidents like this never happen again."

While Hilco received the proper permitting to conduct the implosion, the promised precautions taken by the company were not adequate, and the resulting cloud of dust was a clear violation of Illinois pollution standards. The City immediately



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issued a citation against Hilco that will result in a fine. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is working to provide residents in the immediate vicinity with masks to protect against inhalation of dust and has launched an investigation which includes obtaining and examining samples of the dust in the area. CDPH will be testing the air quality at the site and in the adjacent neighborhood.

“CDPH is committed to monitoring such projects and enforcing all environmental regulations so that the air we all breathe is clean and safe,” said Dr. Allison Arwady, Commissioner of CDPH. “Our health investigators were on the scene to monitor an approved procedure, for which we were assured the impact to the community would be minimal. See as that this wasn’t the case, the City, working with our partners, has begun an investigation to determine what went wrong so that we can prevent this going forward.”

While this situation is under review, the Department of Buildings (DOB) is halting any additional non-emergency demolitions throughout Chicago for the remainder of the week, while the City conducts a full review of standard procedures for the permitting and monitoring of the implosion process. A stronger procedure will be coordinated across all City departments in collaboration with the Chief Sustainability Officer with the goal to provide guidelines for a stricter process to avoid a similar result during future demolitions.

“The Department of Buildings has already begun reviewing the implosion process to ensure that, going forward, it incorporates the most robust technology and sustainability practices, providing for the maximum mitigation of dust,” said Commissioner Frydland. “We are committed to working with our partners in other city departments to ensure all demolitions are conducted safely and with minimal impact to the communities in which they take place.”

CDPH will be working hand in glove with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to determine any additional enforcement measures that may need to be taken, in accordance with Illinois pollution standards. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, CDPH inspectors have continued to monitor essential operations across all neighborhoods and have been monitoring this site weekly to ensure environmental regulations were being followed during demolition. This has included verifying that appropriate dust control measures were taken, that soil and debris was not being tracked out into the surrounding community and that street sweeping occurred regularly on nearby roads.

Prior to the demolition, the company was required to notify neighbors of the project, and City departments worked closely with the local Alderman on community outreach. Hilco was also required to perform proper remediation of the



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smokestack to ensure no asbestos was present. Further, CDPH has completed multiple inspections throughout the demolition process to evaluate conditions.

In addition, following the closure of two coal plants in the Little Village community, including the Crawford site, in recent years, CDPH and the City are committed to continuing to work closely with community partners to mitigate any health risks caused by severe air pollution. The City has made significant progress in establishing stronger regulations to increase air safety monitoring and to hold operators accountable, with the following actions taken: the City established the nation's strongest regulations of bulk materials that emit pollution; banned new petcoke, coke and coal facilities, and prohibited current facilities from expanding; and put a stop to any new manganese-bearing material operations, with rules to prevent existing facilities from expanding.

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