

Communities for a Better Environment

MEDIA RELEASE

July 19, 2006

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**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES PACIFIC STEEL AIR VIOLATIONS
CBE sues polluting Bay Area steel foundry**

Communities for a Better Environment, an Oakland-based environmental health and justice organization, served a federal Clean Air Act lawsuit against Pacific Steel Casting Company, a 74-year-old polluting steel casting foundry located in West Berkeley today. Community residents have complained about odor, headaches, nausea and chest tightness, which they believe are caused by the facility, for over two decades. Pacific Steel is located in an area with a high concentration of low-income people of color, several daycare centers a retirement home, and schools.

"Pacific Steel has been causing a nuisance in this community for a long time. For years, neighbors have complained to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District about the strong odors from the foundry. It's time that the company become a good neighbor, comply with pollution limits and provide the community with information about what's coming out of the plant," stated Janice Schroeder, a local resident and member of the West Berkeley Alliance and CBE.

The lawsuit challenges Pacific Steel Casting to reduce its air emissions to legal limits and come clean about pollution from its facility. Specifically, CBE alleges that Pacific Steel has long exceeded its permitted limit for air pollution at one of the foundry's source – PSC may now be emitting on average more than *12 times* the levels of POCs (precursor organic compounds) allowed for one source by its current operating permit – and has failed to maintain proper records about its operations as mandated by federal law. This information would allow the community to know to a greater degree the extent of the pollution the facility emits. The foundry uses materials that emit POCs and also hazardous air pollutants including phenols, which are known to be highly odorous, as well as particulate matter and other pollutants.

The facility has been under increased scrutiny over the past year. After tremendous pressure from residents, in December 2005, the Air District fined the facility \$17,500 to settle various Notices of Violation for violations that occurred in 2004, and required Pacific Steel to install a carbon adsorption unit at one of the three plants to address recurring public nuisance problems. The settlement further required Pacific Steel to report information about its production at several sources. According to Air District records, Pacific Steel's production has increased in recent years. This increase has resulted in greater emissions than allowed by its current air permit, and may also be responsible for the recurring strong odors from the foundry.

CBE members and other community residents and activists have fought for over two decades to hold Pacific Steel accountable to the community and to improve the environment and public health for West Berkeley residents. The purpose of this lawsuit is first and foremost to force Pacific Steel to clean up its act and comply with its permit limits. Residents also want the facility to submit information that the public has the right to regarding its operations, and ensure public participation in any future permitting.

CBE is represented in this action by the Environmental Law and Justice Clinic at Golden Gate University School of Law and CBE legal counsel.

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