

# PRESS-TELEGRAM

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## GARDEN GROVE

# Risk of catastrophic blast from chemical tank drops

### Threat of most serious possible explosion lessens, fire official says



**By Brian Rokos, Tony Saavedra, Sean Emery, Sierra van der Brug and Jason Henry**  
STAFF WRITERS

The most serious threat of a catastrophic explosion of the malfunctioning chemical storage tank at a Garden Grove aerospace company no longer exists, the incident commander said Sunday, but the danger of an uncontrolled blast remains.

Division Chief Craig Covey of the Orange County Fire Authority said in an interview with freelance news organization OnScene.TV that firefighters had previously been unable to examine the top of the tank at GKN Aerospace on Western Avenue because of the fear of an explosion.

But overnight, they found a crack that may be relieving enough pressure to prevent a massive explosion that could damage buildings and release a toxic vapor cloud.

“That was the success of that intel,” Covey said. “That changes the trajectory of everything and reduces its potential impact on the earth. I’m not saying it can’t explode. The difference is, like, a gas explosion in a building versus a bomb hitting it. So, once we remove that, that really decreases the impact footprint that we’re managing right now, and we can reevaluate our current evacuation.”

A new operation would be conducted Sunday night,

Elizabeth Pichardo sits in her car outside the Freedom Hall shelter at Mile Square Park in Fountain Valley on Sunday after evacuating from her residence due to the threat of an explosion from a malfunctioning chemical tank at GKN Aerospace in Garden Grove. The family spent nearly \$600 on a hotel over the past three nights and has now decided to sleep in their car. **JEFF GRITCHEN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**

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## Newsom asks for federal emergency declaration to bolster response

**By Kaitlyn Schallhorn**  
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Gov. Gavin Newsom has formally requested a federal emergency declaration to aid with the ongoing response at a chemical storage tank at a Garden Grove aerospace company.

Experts and emergency crews have been working since Thursday to try to prevent a

potentially catastrophic chemical spill or explosion at GKN Aerospace. The tank is filled with 7,000 gallons of a highly flammable chemical called methyl methacrylate. Crews have so far been unable to find a solution to end the threat posed by the tank, from which a blast could damage hundreds of homes and buildings in the area and create a toxic plume

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Police gather at the Los Alamitos command center on Sunday amid the ongoing threat of a chemical tank explosion in Garden Grove. **MINDY SCHAUER**  
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## SAN PEDRO

# Military dodgeball contest thrills L.A. Fleet Week crowd

**By Madeline Armstrong**  
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Day 3 of the 10th annual Los Angeles Fleet Week kicked off with military personnel singing as part of the “Military’s Got Talent” competition on Sunday but also included sailors, Marines and others trying to pelt each other in a dodgeball tournament. Live music also filled the San Pedro

harbor as hundreds of attendees filed into the expo area next to the battleship USS Iowa.

Although the sky was gloomy Sunday morning, the attendees were not. In anticipation of one of Fleet Week’s most exciting events, the dodgeball tournament, people crowded into a fenced-off area in

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## Mom’s mission: Honor fallen son, others

**By Erika I. Ritchie**  
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Cheryl Rex hasn’t planned what she’ll say during her speech at the unveiling of a Gold Star memorial monument in Rancho Cucamonga today, but said she’s confident her son, Lance Cpl. Dylan Merola, will help her. Merola, 20, was among the

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Cheryl Rex, mother of U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Dylan Merola, who was killed in 2021, holds his Purple Heart in Rancho Cucamonga on Thursday. **WILL LESTER**  
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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