

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

May 17, 2022

Joint Enforcement Action and Community Notification of Ethylene Oxide Emissions from Sterigenics in the City of Vernon and Surrounding Neighborhoods

On May 6, 2022, the County received a Proposition 65 Notification from the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) identifying a substantial release of ethylene oxide from Sterigenics, a medical sterilization facility in Vernon. SCAQMD issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) to Sterigenics for its failure to maintain equipment in good operating condition and other permitting issues. Ethylene oxide is a known carcinogen that is associated with an increased risk of blood cancers. Exposure to high levels of ethylene oxide for short periods of time can impact the nervous system and cause respiratory irritation.

Sterigenics operates two facilities that use ethylene oxide to sterilize medical devices that are located between 49th St. and 50th St. on Gifford Ave in an industrial area. Both facilities border the community of Maywood. The nearest residential area is about 500 feet away, and the nearest school is about 1700 feet away.

SCAQMD, the regulatory entity that is responsible for air monitoring and enforcing air regulations, is currently working with the State’s Office of Environmental Health and

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Hazard Assessment to evaluate the cancer risk for off-site workers. Individual “grab” samples have been collected at three community locations, and results show levels of ethylene oxide in the community to be consistent with background levels, with the exception of a sample collected downwind at Maywood Elementary School, which was slightly above background range. SCAQMD has placed two air monitors outside of the facilities to collect 24-hour samples, however more continuous air monitoring locations are needed in the surrounding community to better understand the potential exposure of nearby workers, residents, and school populations to the carcinogen, ethylene oxide.

SCAQMD has committed to taking all available regulatory and legal action to reduce harmful emissions from Sterigenics and the operator of the facility has communicated initial plans for corrective action. However, no comprehensive action has been taken at this time. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health’s environmental justice and environmental response teams must coordinate with the lead regulatory agencies and ensure health protective action is taken to monitor, mitigate and prevent future exposure to toxic emissions from Sterigenics. This is a serious environmental justice issue that warrants immediate attention.

I, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Public Health to work in collaboration with the City of Vernon and in partnership with local community organizations and *promotores*/community health workers, to immediately provide nearby community members information on ethylene oxide emissions and what is being done to reduce emissions, as well as its health effects and how residents can reduce potential exposure if it is determined that there are health related risks from these emissions.

I, FURTHER MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Public Health to coordinate an interagency working group to address the release of emissions

at Sterigenics. The Interagency Working Group should:

- a. Include the agencies that investigate and enforce applicable environmental health laws and regulations, such as the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the City of Vernon, and in consultation with the State's Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment, to ensure that any and all enforcement action is taken to protect public health;
- b. Coordinate community notifications, enforcement activities and other health protective actions to prevent exposures to toxic emissions; and
- c. Report back in writing in 30 days and monthly thereafter to the Board with updates on the Working Group's progress.

I, FURTHER MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct County Counsel and the Department of Public Health to explore potential cost recovery for any response services and activities provided by the County and report back in writing within 90 days.

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