



# South Coast Air Quality Management District



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*Office of the Executive Officer  
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May 19, 2022

The Honorable Holly Mitchell  
Chair  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Second District  
822 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Motion 22-1982, Joint Enforcement Action and Community Notification of Ethylene Oxide Emissions from Sterigenics in the City of Vernon and Surrounding Neighborhoods

Dear Chair Mitchell:

South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) is in receipt of Motion 22-1982, *Joint Enforcement Action and Community Notification of Ethylene Oxide Emissions from Sterigenics in the City of Vernon and Surrounding Neighborhoods*.

South Coast AQMD is committed to working with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and its' agencies as well as other governmental entities to address issues related to Sterigenics International, Inc. (Sterigenics). Below is information on South Coast AQMD's on-going investigation and activities. This information also has been provided directly to Supervisor Janice Hahn.

### **Sterigenics Investigation**

In March 2022, South Coast AQMD began a review of Sterigenics given the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's preliminary reconsideration of the potential toxicity of Ethylene Oxide (EtO) and evaluation of risks associated with sterilizer facilities. South Coast AQMD initiated unannounced inspections at the two Sterigenics facilities in Vernon, and initial air samples were collected directly outside their facilities and at a neighboring business. Results indicated elevated levels of EtO, prompting a more comprehensive air monitoring effort and further investigation.

### **Air Monitoring**

On April 22, 2022, South Coast AQMD deployed air monitors near the Vernon facilities and collected multiple 24-hour samples to verify the EtO levels identified in the initial sampling

effort. The monitoring data collected to date has confirmed the initial elevated readings of EtO surrounding the Sterigenics facilities pose an elevated cancer risk for nearby off-site workers. Initial monitoring data at the nearest residents, which are approximately 500 feet from Sterigenics are at or near background levels.

### **Enforcement Action**

On May 5, 2022, South Coast AQMD inspectors issued a Notice of Violation to the Sterigenics 50th Street facility for failure to operate the air pollution control system in accordance with the facility's permit; for failure to maintain the air pollution control system in good operating condition; and for failure to equip control equipment with a pressure gauge and a pH meter, both of which were required in the permit. Inspectors also issued a Notice to Comply requiring the facility to conduct a source test for the air pollution control system. This is an ongoing investigation, and South Coast AQMD continues to take air samples and to evaluate all equipment to ensure that the facilities are following permit conditions and using proper emissions control equipment.

### **Public Complaints**

Over the past five years, South Coast AQMD has not received any public complaints alleging air quality issues at either of the Sterigenics facilities in Vernon. If any air quality complaints for these facilities are received, South Coast AQMD inspectors will respond promptly.

### **Proposition 65 Notice and Community Notification**

On May 6, 2022, South Coast AQMD issued a Proposition 65 Notification to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles County Health Officer, and the City of Vernon Director of Health of the discharge of EtO from Sterigenics that was likely to impact public health or safety. South Coast AQMD has also notified the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health of the potential EtO exposure to employees at these facilities.

Additionally, South Coast AQMD has reached out to federal, state, and local elected officials – including the City of Maywood – and other government agencies to provide information regarding Sterigenics. A Press Release was issued in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) on May 6. Also, the South Coast AQMD has a dedicated [webpage](#) that has background information, enforcement information, and monitoring data with a link to [sign up](#) for updates related to South Coast AQMD's ongoing investigation of Sterigenics.

A public meeting is not currently planned as the air monitoring data continues to show EtO levels in the residential portion of the community to be within background levels. If there is a change in the air monitoring data that indicates a potential impact on the neighboring residential areas, South Coast AQMD will immediately organize a community meeting.

### **AB 2588 Air Toxics Hot Spots Program**

The AB 2588 Air Toxics Hot Spots Program requires that facilities associated with health risks to residents or off-site workers above certain thresholds take action to reduce those

May 19, 2022

risks. On May 6, 2022, South Coast AQMD notified the facility that it may be designated as a Potentially High-Risk Level Facility based on the elevated air monitoring results showing potentially high-risk levels for off-site workers. If designated, Sterigenics will be required to implement measures to reduce risks from the facility and provide detailed information on its toxic air emissions and potential health risks.

**Next Steps**

South Coast AQMD is working with the operator of Sterigenics on immediate and near-term actions, including measures to reduce EtO emissions, identification and mitigation of emission sources that are contributing to the elevated levels, and on-site testing with a focus on the wet scrubber at the 50th Street facility.

South Coast AQMD has various statutory authorities to address violations at permitted and unpermitted facilities. The Health and Safety Code empowers the agency, in appropriate cases, to petition for an Order for Abatement from the South Coast AQMD Hearing Board. An Order for Abatement may contain a variety of conditions, but it must require a facility to refrain from ongoing violations of air quality rules and regulations or cease operating. Any failure to comply with an Order for Abatement can subject a facility to increased civil penalties or further legal action.

South Coast AQMD is committed to doing everything within our authority, and working closely with our partner agencies, to protect the health and safety of community members and workers who may be impacted by Sterigenics. I can be reached at 909-396-3131 or by email at [wnastri@aqmd.gov](mailto:wnastri@aqmd.gov).

Sincerely,



Wayne Nastri  
Executive Officer

WN:dw

cc: Honorable Janice Hahn, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Fourth District