



South Coast Air Quality Management District

21865 Copley Drive, Diamond Bar, CA 91765-4178
(909) 396-2000 • www.aqmd.gov

NEWS

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SCAQMD Calls for Special Hearing **to Discuss Concerns about Repeated Incidents at Torrance Refinery**

Due to yesterday's fire and repeated operational problems, South Coast Air Quality Management District officials will conduct a hearing to discuss air quality impacts from the Torrance refinery with members of the community.

"I'm very disappointed in the frequency of breakdowns, flaring, accidents and fires at the Torrance refinery and I'm concerned about the impact of these incidents to community residents," said SCAQMD Governing Board Chairman William A. Burke, Ed.D.

"The refinery must step up its efforts to reduce the frequency and severity of these episodes," he said. Toward that end, I am calling for a full hearing to investigate and resolve these matters."

The SCAQMD will announce plans in the coming days to hold a community hearing in Torrance where members of the agency's staff and Governing Board will meet and discuss concerns about the refinery with community residents.

Yesterday at about 6 a.m., the Torrance Refining Co. facility at 3700 W. 190th St. experienced a fire in a crude oil unit. The fire was extinguished within 30 minutes with no resulting injuries but the refinery did have to burn excess gases through a flare stack, causing excess air pollution.

Last year, the Torrance refinery flared on numerous occasions including three incidents that resulted from a loss of power. On Oct. 11, 2016, the refinery lost all power in the early morning and flared thick black smoke for more than four hours. The City of Torrance issued a temporary shelter-in-place order. SCAQMD received 67 complaints from residents and issued a Notice of Violation to the refinery for causing a public nuisance.

In February 2015, under prior ownership, a large explosion in an air pollution control device ejected heavy metal parts, narrowly missing a unit that contains highly toxic hydrofluoric acid.

On Feb. 16, the Torrance refinery agreed to an administrative order by the SCAQMD Hearing Board requiring the facility to improve power reliability and reduce air pollution from

power-related flaring incidents. While the refinery must meet specific milestones and deadlines under the order, the overall effort will take years to complete.

“Residents have suffered too long from excess air pollution due to preventable flaring, not to mention fear of the next potential accident at the refinery,” Burke said. “At our upcoming hearing, we will discuss steps that the refinery should take now to reduce these potentially harmful incidents.”

For more information on SCAQMD’s response to air quality issues at the Torrance refinery, see <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/compliance/torrance>.

The SCAQMD is the air pollution control agency for Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

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