



South Coast Air Quality Management District

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NEWS

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Torrance Refinery Agrees to Take Steps to Improve Power Reliability, Reduce Flaring

Torrance Refining Co. LLC has agreed to an administrative order requiring the facility to take specific steps to improve power reliability with the aim of reducing air pollution from flaring incidents.

“The Torrance refinery flared on three occasions last year following power interruptions including one incident when the city issued a shelter-in-place order,” said Wayne Nastri, executive officer for the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

“Today’s order is the result of a successful collaboration between SCAQMD, the Torrance refinery and Southern California Edison to identify improvements that will enable the refinery to better withstand power interruptions that can cause flaring incidents.”

The independent SCAQMD Hearing Board today adopted an administrative order, known as an Order for Abatement. Under the order the facility must meet specified timelines to enhance its backup power capability and also demonstrate the reliability improvements expected from its proposal to construct a dedicated underground power supply line.

The Torrance refinery and SCAQMD staff agreed on the terms of the order prior to the hearing. It marks the first time that SCAQMD has sought and obtained an administrative order requiring a refinery to upgrade its power systems to reduce flaring.

Due to the complexity of the refinery and the electrical grid system, the entire process of installing an underground power line could take seven to eight years and will cost tens of millions of dollars. However, the refinery will be required to meet the following initial milestones:

- Within 90 days, complete a public outreach and community relations plan including updates to the Torrance City Council and the Torrance Refinery Community Advisory Panel;
- Within 180 days, develop a computer model to demonstrate how proposed upgrades from the current 66 kilovolt (kV) electrical system to a 220-kV system will improve electrical reliability at the refinery;

- Within 180 days, provide refresher training and simulations for refinery workers for procedures during loss of power;
- Provide evidence that existing backup power supply systems are maintained and working; and
- Within 270 days, complete evaluations of critical safety devices and certain utility systems, and within 365 days of completing the evaluations, implement improvements identified.

The Hearing Board will conduct a status hearing on Sept. 7 to review the refinery's progress in meeting the order's milestones and deadlines. The Hearing Board will maintain jurisdiction over the order until all its requirements are completed.

The Torrance refinery, at 3700 W. 190th St., experienced power cuts and as a result conducted flaring on March 16, Sept. 19 and Oct. 11-12, 2016. (The refinery conducted flaring on several other occasions last year, but not as a result of power interruptions.)

On Oct. 11, 2016, the refinery lost all power in the early morning and flared thick black smoke for more than four hours, and flared for a total of more than 39 hours. SCAQMD received 67 complaints from residents and issued a Notice of Violation to the refinery for causing a public nuisance.

PBF Energy, based in Parsippany, N.J., purchased the refinery from ExxonMobil and took over operation of the facility on July 1, 2016.

Flaring is a safety measure used at refineries to prevent explosions or accidents that could result from gases building up excess pressure. When flared, the combusted gas typically causes large flames, and can result in black smoke when power losses impact steam generation.

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