



South Coast  
AQMD

SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT  
**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Violations Issued to Sterilization Facility in Vernon, Release of Toxic Emissions Discovered**

**DIAMOND BAR** – The South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) yesterday issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) to Sterigenics, located in Vernon, Calif., for failure to maintain its equipment in good operating condition and other permit issues. The agency also identified a substantial release of Ethylene Oxide (EtO) from the facility. However, preliminary data shows EtO levels in the community to be within background levels and below health risk levels established by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA).

“Facilities are required to properly maintain their air pollution control equipment and to comply with all permit conditions in order to avoid excess emissions,” said Wayne Nastri, South Coast AQMD’s Executive Officer. “We will continue to conduct air sampling in the area and near the community, and we will do everything in our power to reduce emissions from the facility.”

Sterigenics operates two facilities that use EtO to sterilize medical devices that are located between 49<sup>th</sup> St. and 50<sup>th</sup> St. on Gifford Ave in an industrial area. The nearest residential area is about 500 feet away, and the nearest school is about 1700 feet away.

In March 2022, following the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s reconsideration of the potential toxicity from EtO, South Coast AQMD conducted an evaluation of the Sterigenics facilities. Initial observations prompted the agency to collect air samples that were taken directly outside the facilities, and results showed elevated levels of EtO, prompting more comprehensive air monitoring and further investigation. An April 29<sup>th</sup> inspection of the 50<sup>th</sup> St. facility found several violations including equipment that was not listed in the permit and multiple storage tanks that were not properly maintained.

Two air monitors have been placed outside of the facilities to collect 24-hour samples. Initial data shows elevated levels of EtO emissions. South Coast AQMD is currently evaluating the cancer risk for off-site workers and is working on validating that information with OEHHA. Individual samples have been collected at three community locations, and results show levels of EtO in the community to be within

background levels and below state health risk levels. Air monitoring efforts for a more extensive evaluation are continuing in the community.

EtO is a flammable, colorless gas used to sterilize medical equipment and make products including antifreeze, textiles, solvents, detergents, and adhesives. Short-term exposure to EtO may cause headaches, weakness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, eye and skin burns, and reproductive effects. Long-term exposure to EtO over a number of years increases the risk of certain cancers including lymphoid cancer and breast cancer.

NOVs can result in civil penalties. In some cases, the company can choose to implement voluntary measures to reduce emissions or otherwise prevent further violations. If no settlement is reached, a civil lawsuit may ultimately be filed in superior court.

South Coast AQMD's investigation is ongoing. More information as well as sampling data can be found at [www.aqmd.gov/sterigenics](http://www.aqmd.gov/sterigenics).

South Coast AQMD is the regulatory agency responsible for improving air quality for large areas of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, including the Coachella Valley. For news, air quality alerts, event updates and more, please visit us at [www.aqmd.gov](http://www.aqmd.gov), download our award-winning app, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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