



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

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## **South Coast AQMD Designates Sterigenics in Vernon as Potentially High Risk Facility**

*Sterilization facility required to reduce toxic emissions*

**DIAMOND BAR** – Yesterday, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) designated Sterigenics US, Inc. in Vernon, Calif., as a Potentially High Risk Level Facility, requiring the facility to reduce toxic emissions from operations as well as provide reports on potential health risks.

Under South Coast AQMD's [Rule 1402](#), a facility is designated a Potentially High Risk Level Facility when emissions data show either a potential to exceed or that emissions have already exceeded a cancer risk threshold greater than 100 chances in a million. As a High Risk Level Facility, Sterigenics is on an accelerated path to identify and implement measures to reduce their health risk and is required to provide South Coast AQMD with an **Early Action Reduction Plan** within 90 days that includes a list of steps that can be taken immediately to reduce health risks. This can include procedure or process changes, equipment modifications and operational cutbacks to reduce emissions. In addition, the facility must fully evaluate its air toxics emissions, conduct a Health Risk Assessment, and submit a final plan to reduce cancer risks below thresholds within 180 days.

Sterigenics conducts sterilization of medical equipment using a gas called Ethylene Oxide (EtO) and is located in two buildings between 49th St. and 50th St. on Gifford Ave in an industrial area in Vernon. The nearest residential area is about 500 feet away, and the nearest school is about 1700 feet away.

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.

In March 2022, following the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (U.S. EPA) 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. EtO levels in the community continue to be within background levels. U.S. EPA has yet to finalize its actions regarding the reconsideration of risk factors for EtO.

South Coast AQMD's full investigation continues including air sampling and an evaluation into the facilities' equipment and compliance with agency regulations and permit requirements. The agency is also working towards stricter rules and requirements for EtO emissions from medical sterilization facilities such as Sterigenics.

South Coast AQMD has also notified the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of potential exposure to employees at the Vernon facilities and is working closely Los Angeles County Department of Public Health on additional risk assessment.

More information on South Coast AQMD's investigation, 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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