

Mojtaba Moghani

From: Renate Boronowsky <renate.ware@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 27, 2023 3:16 PM
To: Heather Farr; Mojtaba Moghani
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Public Comment - Enhancing Fence Line and Community Monitoring for Refinery Operations

Dear South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) members,

I trust this message finds you well. My name is Renate and I am a committed PhD student in environmental engineering, as well as a member of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice. At this past week's workshop, I provided a public comment concerning the notification thresholds for air quality, particularly for sensitive groups. I wish to underscore the significance of this matter and encourage the AQMD to consider my perspective.

In line with the AQMD's expressed concern over the volume of notifications, I'd like to emphasize that *the crux of the matter is indeed the frequency of these alerts*. It is vital for residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable, to be made aware of the potential health risks posed by the air they breathe, and the frequency at which they are exposed to these harmful pollutants.

Many folks living in the vicinity of oil operations and refineries often have no option to relocate, and these communities are often characterized by lower income demographics. Disabled community members often live in low income neighborhoods due to the policies that limit access to social services based on an income cap. Those who live on ventilators, and experience other disabilities are much more likely to be harmed by pollutants within their environment, thus necessitating the need for notifications that inform sensitive groups.

It's also important to stress that the health challenges prevalent in these communities extend beyond air quality alone. These communities frequently grapple with a host of issues, including diet-related illnesses, trauma, and stress ailments that come as a direct result of living in poverty and near industrial operations. These additional factors compound with toxin emissions and further impact the health of many residents.

Moreover, the need to safeguard infants and children who inhabit or attend schools in these communities cannot be overstated. Some of these pollutants can impact brain development, and increase cancer risks. Clean air is a human right and something that every child should have access to. *Given these circumstances, I strongly urge the AQMD to revise the notification thresholds for each pollutant, aligning them with the level of risk to sensitive groups*. This revision should encompass both acute events and long-term exposures.

In sharing my perspective, I would also like to provide a personal context. I am a mother of twins who were born prematurely and brought home to our residence in West Long Beach that was just a few blocks from the edge of the Carson Marathon Refinery. In our time living on W Cameron street, our family experienced many flares from nearby refineries, often in the middle of the night. I distinctly recall a harrowing incident, as we were sitting with our infants in the garden, alarms blared and a heavy cloud of yellow smoke blew in our direction. When I called the police to see if we should be evacuating the area or shutting our windows, I was brushed off and told I would be notified if anyone needed to evacuate. They could tell me nothing of the pollutant that was escaping, nor the potential impacts to our health, and had no advice on how to protect us. However, I am confident that if I had been an individual calling from Bixby Knolls or Belmont Shore, my experience with the emergency services would have played out very differently. These events are vivid reminders of the tangible impact refinery operations can have on individuals and communities.

As a society, we bear a duty and a moral obligation to protect and value the life of the most vulnerable members of our population. The policies and practices that emerge from AQMD's decisions are pivotal in

determining the degree of equity – or lack thereof – that exists in terms of disability, race, and economic discrimination. Your policies implemented now can begin to repair the legacies of the environmentally racist policies of the past, and to help prevent further overall environmental degradation.

As an additional consideration, I align with the sentiment expressed by my fellow East Yard community members regarding accessibility. It is imperative that workshops and policy materials be made more comprehensible for all members of our community. I wholeheartedly support the implementation of text message notifications, recognizing their accessibility to a wide range of residents. However, I advocate for the integration of diverse communication methods. Multiple modalities should be developed. The existing South Coast AQMD app, for instance, presents an opportunity to offer residents real-time insights into emissions, risks, and pollution trends, fostering a deeper understanding of their environment.

Lastly, I urge the AQMD to expand the scope of refinery fees to include community projects aimed at environmental restoration and public health enhancement. In addition to covering monitoring device setup costs, the fees paid by refineries should contribute to alleviating the community impacts they generate. This could encompass initiatives such as providing funding to local environmental nonprofits, implementing tree plantings, providing and installing diverse air filter systems, and other projects that empower residents to proactively safeguard their health, regardless of their economic status.

In conclusion, I implore you to recognize the far-reaching consequences of your decisions on our most vulnerable populations. By embracing a more equitable and comprehensive approach to fence line and community monitoring, you play a pivotal role in shaping the well-being of our communities. I trust you will carefully consider these perspectives as you work toward a more just and inclusive future for all.

Thank you for your time and for your dedication to this work.

Sincerely,

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Renate Boronowsky

(pronounced: Ren-ah-ta)

(She/Her/Hers)

Environmental Engineering PhD Student

University of California Los Angeles

650.619.3172

renate.ware@gmail.com

rboronowsky@g.ucla.edu