



South Coast
AQMD

SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
PRESS RELEASE

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South Coast AQMD Requires Sterigenics in Ontario to Temporarily Shut Down Due to Elevated Ethylene Oxide Readings

Full Operations can resume once levels are back to those approved in Emissions Reduction Plan

DIAMOND BAR – Today, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) required Sterigenics US, LLC, a medical sterilization facility in Ontario, California, to temporarily shut down operations due to elevated readings of ethylene oxide (EtO), a toxic air contaminant, detected near the facility.

South Coast AQMD approved an Early Action Reduction Plan on April 7, 2023, requiring the facility to take steps to immediately reduce health risks from its EtO operations. To ensure EtO levels are not increasing while additional pollution controls are being installed, the Plan includes interim thresholds to curtail operations if EtO levels are persistently elevated. If air monitoring results near the facility show one EtO value at 17.5 parts ppb or higher, the facility must curtail operations. Repeated exceedances of the threshold require the facility to temporarily shut down.

On April 12, 15, and 18, monitoring data showed EtO data near the facility to be at 33.6 ppb, 24.3 ppb and 39.8 ppb respectively. The facility must remain shut down for a minimum of three days and will not be able to resume full operations until air monitoring shows levels below the 17.5 ppb threshold.

The Interim threshold is in place until all other actions committed to in the Plan by the facility are implemented including: the construction of a Permanent Total Enclosure (PTE) to prevent emissions from escaping the buildings and implement an enhanced leak detection and repair system. Upon completion of these other actions, EtO levels should be substantially lower.

South Coast AQMD is communicating with other agencies, such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on the potential impacts to the sterilization industry. South Coast AQMD is also working towards stricter rules and requirements for EtO emissions from medical sterilization facilities as well as

reviewing new draft health standards for EtO released by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

Sterigenics uses EtO to sterilize medical equipment. The facility is located in an industrial area at 687 Wanamaker Avenue in Ontario. The nearest residential community is located more than 1.5 miles away from this facility. Since June 16, 2022, South Coast AQMD has routinely collected 24-hour air monitoring samples adjacent to and nearby Sterigenics. The levels recorded are substantially higher than the 2021 annual average EtO concentration from the nearest South Coast AQMD regional monitoring station in Rubidoux, which is 0.06 ppbv (with a maximum value of 0.14 ppbv). Over many years, these levels would present a cancer risk to nearby workers higher than the cancer risk threshold of greater than 100 chances in a million.

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. The most significant public health risk is long-term exposure to EtO over a number of years due to an increased risk of certain cancers including lymphoid and breast cancer.

More information on South Coast AQMD's investigation, as well as sampling data can be found at <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/news-events/community-investigations/sterigenics-ontario>.

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

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