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# AQMD sues Vernon battery plant over pollution violations

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By Wave Staff and Wire Reports

The South Coast Air Quality Management District filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court Jan. 16 seeking up to \$40 million in penalties from a Vernon company for numerous alleged air quality violations due primarily to illegal emissions of lead and arsenic.

The suit was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court against Exide Technologies. The firm at [2700 S. Indiana St.](#), is one of only two lead-acid battery recycling plants west of the Rockies. In operation since 1922, the plant currently recycles 23,000 to 41,000 batteries daily.

“Exide has had a steady stream of operational problems that have resulted in excess toxic emissions,”

AQMD Executive Officer Barry Wallerstein said. “These toxic emissions have exposed more than 100,000 residents to an unacceptable cancer risk and for that reason we are seeking to recover a significant penalty from them.”

A company spokesman could not immediately be reached.

The AQMD is also seeking an order from its hearing board that would require Exide to stop its smelting operations until it can improve its air pollution control systems to reduce arsenic emissions.

AQMD also has ordered Exide to strengthen and resubmit a risk reduction plan to reduce its arsenic emissions.

In early 2013, AQMD approved a health risk assessment from Exide showing that the facility was causing an unacceptably high cancer risk for 110,000 residents in Southeast Los Angeles County primarily due to its arsenic emissions.

The AQMD then required the facility to develop a risk reduction plan under the agency’s Rule 1402 and the state’s Toxic Hot Spots law.

The agency rejected Exide’s first plan as inadequate and is now evaluating the company’s resubmitted plan.

In other news pertaining to Exide Technologies, the state Senate Committee on Environmental Quality has approved SB 712 by state Sen. Ricardo Lara, D-Huntington Park, urging the firm to complete its permit process or be closed.

The bill would require Exide Technologies to either complete the state permitting process by 2015, or have their interim permit revoked.

Exide has been operating under interim status without a final permit from the department since the early 1980s.

Officials from Exide told members of the South Coast Regional Air Quality Management District on Jan. 10 that it would spend \$7 million to reduce air pollution it causes.

The Senate committee recently heard testimony from dozens of local residents and advocates who travelled to Sacramento to speak in favor of the legislation, a Lara spokesperson said.

“Residents from the communities surrounding hazardous waste facilities, like Exide in my district, have suffered for decades as the plant has repeatedly violated health and safety standards, releasing harmful emissions and contaminating the local environment,” Lara said.

SB 712 was approved 8-0 and will move forward to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

“We are tired of [the Department of Toxic Substances Control] dragging its feet, allowing this facility to operate for decades without an enforceable permit and to poison our neighborhoods over and over again. Today we moved one step closer to finally forcing DTSC and Exide to be accountable to the public” said Maya Golden Krasner with Communities for a Better Environment, based in Huntington Park.

“I was very pleased to see that the committee fully supported SB 712,” said Angelo Logan from East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice. “We believe this is a necessary step to protect the health of the public in the district. The community members that made the long trek from Southeast Los Angeles to the Capitol were excited to see their representative move this bill forward.”