

Environmental Groups File Notice of Intent to Sue Los Angeles County Oil Refinery Over Hazardous Waste Violations

Environmental Integrity Project, Environmental Advocates, and Communities for a Better Environment Take Action Against Phillips 66 Refinery

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Los Angeles -- The Environmental Integrity Project and Environmental Advocates, on behalf of Communities for a Better Environment, today filed a notice of intent to sue the Phillips 66 Los Angeles Refinery for violations of hazardous waste disposal laws.

The notice, which is the first step in a federal lawsuit, alleges that Phillips 66 violated the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act since at least August 2015 by storing, treating, and disposing of hazardous waste without a permit and failing to properly operate and maintain the plant, among other violations.

"Many of the documented violations illustrate very poor housekeeping practices at the refinery and indicate that required maintenance has been long deferred, which potentially can be dangerous to workers and those living nearby as well as harmful to the environment," said EIP Deputy Director Mary Greene. "It's not fair to the local residents to put them at risk of contamination."

The Phillips 66 Los Angeles Refinery in Los Angeles County includes the Wilmington Plant, located at 1660 W. Anaheim Street in Wilmington, which has been in operation for a century and produces gasoline, liquid petroleum and jet fuel. This facility is connected via pipeline to the newer Carson Plant, located at 1520 E. Sepulveda Boulevard, which produces diesel and naphtha distillates, among other products.

Neither plant has applied for or been issued a hazardous waste operating permit even though EPA determined in August 2015 that Phillips 66 was storing, treating, and disposing of hazardous waste.

"These hazardous waste violations mean that Phillips has potentially exposed the surrounding community to hazardous waste for years. This is one more example of their un-neighborlike ways," said Ashley Hernandez, Wilmington resident and Community Organizer for Communities for a Better Environment (CBE). "On top of that, our regulatory agencies have failed to follow up for too long. Once again, we as frontline environmental justice communities have to rise up to hold Phillips 66 accountable for our health."

From August 24 to 28, 2015, EPA inspected the plants and found that Phillips 66 was in violation of multiple provisions of the hazardous waste laws, including improper treatment and storage of hazardous waste; failure to determine whether wastes are hazardous; failure to follow regulations that control air pollution from tanks; failure to manage run-off from waste piles; and failure to maintain an operating record. The violations EPA uncovered during the site inspections were documented in inspection reports sent to Phillips 66 in December 2016.

On January 23, 2017, EPA issued Phillips 66 a notice of violation. Since then, neither the federal EPA or the California EPA has taken any enforcement action against the company, imposed any penalties on the company, or compelled it to fix the problems.

“The unresolved violations at these plants provide a glaring illustration of failed environmental enforcement at both the federal and state levels,” said Christopher Sproul, attorney for Environmental Advocates. “This problem needs to be addressed to protect the local community and the workers in the plant.”

“It has been two years since Phillips 66 received a notice of hazardous violations by the EPA,” said Ashley Hernandez of CBE. “Every day that goes by without any action is another day that frontline environmental justice communities' safety is ignored by these major polluters and regulatory agencies.”

Worth noting is the fact that there have been two fires at the Carson plant in the last six months, in March and May of 2019. Though not identified as the cause of either fire, failure to properly and safely manage hazardous waste contributes to the risk of dangerous explosions and fires.

For a copy of the notice, [click here](#).

The Environmental Integrity Project is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C., and Austin, Texas, that protects public health and the environment by investigating polluters, holding them accountable under the law, and strengthening public policy.

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