



COMMUNITIES FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT

*Building Community Power to Achieve Environmental Justice,
Clean Energy and Healthy Communities*

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California Communities Living with Deadly Chemical in Their Backyards Testify at Air District Board Meeting to Urge Immediate Phase Out

Multiple community and environmental groups attended Air District meeting urging ban of toxic chemical in the only two refineries in the state that still use it.

Diamond Bar, CA-- Today, community members and environmental justice advocates mobilized to advocate for the immediate ban, or phase out within 4 years (2023), of Modified Hydrofluoric Acid (MHF) from The Torrance Refinery and Wilmington (Los Angeles) Valero Refinery. [The South Coast Air Quality Management District's \(AQMD\)](#) staff presented a report and sought a recommendation on next steps, which could literally mean life or death for hundreds of thousands of Angelenos at least 3-4 miles out from two oil refineries, according to U.S. EPA and AQMD, and probably much farther. [AQMD staff's presentation](#) provided vivid and horrifying data and visuals regarding the risk of a catastrophic release of deadly MHF. AQMD directed staff to investigate both an MOU and an MHF phaseout, and report back to the Board's Refinery Committee in 90 days on these options.

Photos from the meeting can be found [here](#).

Especially after a 2015 near-miss from a catastrophic MHF release in Torrance ([US Chemical Safety Board](#) p.24), MHF poses a risk too great. At today's meeting, Board members recognized the impossibility of being able to protect the safety of the workers and community during an earthquake or other disasters.

"Even Dupont identified major hazards of using HF in densely populated areas. The chemical can form a dense aerosol cloud shooting for miles out, exposing hundreds of thousands to one of the most-deadly chemicals in the world," **said CBE Senior Scientist, Julia May**. "Continuing to allow its use borders on insanity, especially since the Torrance refinery already had a near-miss catastrophic release, and considering the San Andreas is locked and loaded, and an earthquake may be imminent."

"It's time the AQMD stand up to Valero and Torrance refineries by putting a ban on deadly MHF as soon as possible before having to face a preventable and catastrophic release of the chemical," **said Alicia Rivera, Wilmington Community Organizer for CBE**.

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) and a broad coalition recently submitted [this letter](#) to AQMD alerting Governing Board Members of to the true dangers of MHF and urging the Board to prioritize community and worker safety protections over big oil interests. The Wilmington community faces multiple refinery hazards and sits on the largest U.S. urban oil field. CBE community members already face a variety of health issues related to toxic air contaminants.

A potential MHF release is yet another imminent danger not only for Wilmington and Torrance (ground zero), but also for a broad swath of Los Angeles, far beyond these communities. The Torrance Refinery and Wilmington (Los Angeles) Valero Refinery are the only refineries in the state that use MHF. MHF is corrosive and can cause lingering burns, accumulation of lung fluid, permanent lung damage, eye damage, and death during a major release ([Center for Disease Control](#)).

Opponents of an MOU phase out have cited high costs as the main obstacles to an MHF phaseout. However, multiple refineries in the US operate profitably without using MHF. Our Senior Scientist, Julia May, put together this [fact sheet](#) contesting the cost fallacy.

Please contact us for additional evidence and maps.

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