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Contact: Alexandra Nagy, alexandra@sunstonestrategies.org, (818) 633-0865

Gissela Chavez, gissela@cbeocal.org, (323) 521-9445

LATEST OIL INDUSTRY ACCOUNTABILITY CAMPAIGN - FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES ARE SET TO WIN MAJOR TOXIC POLLUTION CUTS FROM SOUTH COAST REFINERY STORAGE TANKS

SCAQMD Governing Board Meeting Sept. 1st Set to Adopt Life Changing Amendments to Rule 1178

Diamond Bar, CA – In the latest move for protections from oil industry impacts, the largest air quality regulator in the state - the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) - is set to approve a major tightening of oil refinery regulation. This would cut cancer-causing benzene emissions and smog-forming Volatile Organic Compounds or VOCs in environmental justice communities. [Proposed Amended Rule 1178](#) (PAR 1178) was only added to the Community Emission Reduction Plan (CERP) for Wilmington, Carson, and West Long Beach (with the highest concentration of Oil Refining on the West Coast) after CBE and allies won its addition in 2019. If adopted Friday, the regulation will finally implement that plan, also apply to the whole South Coast region, and set a national precedent. It is projected to slash emissions by adding domes onto floating roof crude oil storage tanks that were previously exempted, require weekly inspection with Infrared Optical Gas Imaging (OGI) cameras to detect invisible leaks, and require more stringent standards for leaking seals and other components. These modifications are estimated to cut VOCs by about one ton/day (though this is a conservative estimate, and far greater emissions could be cut). The rule would affect about 30 facilities (including oil refineries and petroleum tank farms), and nearly a thousand tanks.

"Tight controls on cancer-causing and smog-forming refinery storage tank emissions not only protects community health in the short term – it is part of a much broader need." **said Julia May, Senior Scientist at Communities for a Better Environment.** "The big picture of Refinery Accountability also includes the Governor's work to protect working class consumers from gasoline price-gouging and state Greenhouse Gas plans to gradually phase out inherently dirty refinery fossil fuel production before the climate is destroyed. We need all of it."

The need for tightening Air District tanks rules came to light in 2017 after reported refinery VOC emissions were found grossly underestimated by the [Fluxsense study](#) on Los Angeles refineries, commissioned by AQMD. Direct measurements found refineries with on average six times higher VOCs and 34 times higher cancer-causing benzene compared to reported emissions (due to Storage Tanks, where emission calculations don't include degradation over time). CBE and allies propose a repeat of the Fluxsense study every 3-5 years to confirm regulatory effectiveness.

“The Air District must protect the community members it serves. These emissions harm our health, and must stop.” **said Dulce Altamirano, Wilmington resident and CBE member.** “Living near a refinery is like a slow death, I have been here for 25 years and my community continues to get sick. We can’t wait any longer, we need them to be bold and speed up protections because we are fighting against time here.”

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) alongside partners like Earthjustice, are also urging the Air District to further strengthen the rule to remove loopholes potentially allowing weaker “alternative” compliance. Proposed timelines in the regulation unfortunately are far too long. Most refiners are allowed until 2038 (15 years!) to dome crude oil tanks; one is allowed until 2041(18 years!).

“We had to push to get this regulation into the Wilmington, Carson, W. Long Beach Community Emissions Reduction Plan under AB617 years ago.” **said Alicia Rivera, Wilmington Community Organizer with Communities for a Better Environment.** “The regulation adoption is turning the plan into a real community win! The fight to *phase out* oil refineries also continues, but today we celebrate important protections for thousands living near these facilities.”

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[Communities for a Better Environment](#) (CBE) is one of the preeminent environmental justice organizations in the nation. Founded in 1978, the mission of CBE is to build people’s power in California’s low-income communities of color by preventing and reducing pollution through the building of green, healthy, and sustainable environments to achieve environmental health and justice. CBE provides California residents in heavily polluted urban communities with community organizing skills, leadership training, legal, scientific, and technical assistance so that they can successfully confront threats to their health and well-being.