



NEWS

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First in the nation

Air District Board Adopts Refinery Flare Rule

San Francisco, July 20, 2005. The Board of Directors of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) today adopted a rule to reduce flaring at the Bay Area's five oil refineries. The rule, the first of its kind in the nation, affects flares presently in operation. It will reduce air pollution by minimizing flaring during normal operations. Flaring – the burning off of excess gases at refineries to prevent them from being vented directly into the atmosphere – will still be allowed when necessary to safely operate a refinery.

"Our Board took an historic step today to reduce the community's exposure to harmful air pollutants from refinery flares," said Executive Officer Jack P. Broadbent. "This will provide better health protection for residents living close to the refineries and will reduce overall levels of air pollution both in the Bay Area and in downwind locations," Broadbent said.

In June 2003, the Board adopted a flare monitoring rule which required refineries to monitor and report flare emission data to the Air District. By installing compressors to recover refinery gases and by instituting better operating practices, flare emissions have been reduced by 75 percent - from eight tons per day of total organic compounds, on average, to two tons per day at the present time.

The Board action today builds on the 2003 rule by making these reductions permanent. It requires that each refinery prepare a Flare Minimization Plan (FMP) that determines how best to further minimize flaring. Air District staff will carefully review the plans for effectiveness and take public comment on them. The FMPs must include:

- detailed information about equipment and operating practices related to flares,
- steps the refinery has taken and will take to minimize the frequency and duration of flaring, and
- a schedule for implementation of all feasible flare prevention measures.

Plans must be approved by the Air District. The FMPs will be updated annually to incorporate the latest technologies and practices.

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The rule also requires a causal analysis of flaring events involving the emission of more than 500,000 cubic feet of gases. Less significant events will also be included in a required annual report and feasible prevention measures will be incorporated into the FMPs. These evaluation processes will result in continuous improvement and management of major flaring events.

The new flare reduction rule was developed through a broad participatory process that included a working group of community and environmental representatives, refinery operators, federal, state and local agency representatives and Air District staff. In addition, two evening workshops were held in the community earlier this year to receive public input.

This rule is the first of its kind in the nation – and probably in the world.

For further information and background on refinery flares and the new rule, visit the Air District's website at [www.baaqmd.gov/pln/ruledev/regulatory_public_hearings.htm](http://www.baaqmd.gov/pln/ruleddev/regulatory_public_hearings.htm).

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