



NEWS

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Bay Area Air District Approves Refinery Flare Minimization Plans

Air District's Rule is the first of its kind in the nation to reduce flaring

San Francisco, Calif. – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) announced today that it has approved Flare Minimization Plans prepared by the five Bay Area petroleum refineries subject to the Air District's Regulation 12, Rule 12, Flares at Petroleum Refineries. The rule, adopted on July 20, 2005, seeks to reduce emissions at petroleum refineries by minimizing the frequency and magnitude of flaring. It prohibits the non-emergency use of a refinery flare unless that use is consistent with an approved Flare Minimization Plan ("Plan"). The rule is structured to capture reductions previously realized by the refineries, and requires petroleum refineries to identify and implement all feasible prevention measures to further minimize flaring in a continuous improvement process.

"This is a true success story," said Air District Executive Officer, Jack P. Broadbent. "This effort has been many years in the making and has already yielded positive results. We've obtained commitments from each of the refineries to make capital and operational improvements to ensure that they eliminate unnecessary flaring. Over time, this regulation will continue to further improve air quality in the communities nearest the refineries and throughout our region."

Refinery flares are first and foremost safety devices intended to protect the safety of refinery workers and the public and the integrity of the refinery. For this reason, Regulation 12, Rule 12 gives refineries flexibility to develop a Plan specific to the unique design and operation of each facility. The regulation specifically allows flaring in emergency situations if necessary to prevent accident, hazard, or release of dangerous gasses directly into the atmosphere.

This rule is the first of its kind in the nation to reduce flaring at refineries. In order to obtain approval by the District, the refineries had to demonstrate in their Plans that every feasible prevention measure not already undertaken will be implemented expeditiously. Examples of prevention measures include installation of additional flare gas recovery compressors and balancing refinery operations to prevent flaring. With this approval, the prevention measures in the Plans are enforceable regulatory requirements.

Emissions from refinery flares are currently estimated at 1.0 ton per day of total organic compounds (TOC) and 0.65 tons per day of sulfur dioxide (SO₂). These emission levels reflect significant reductions resulting from actions taken by the Bay Area refineries in recent years.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is the public agency chartered with regulating stationary sources of air pollution in the nine Bay Area counties.

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