



NEWS RELEASE

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Air District sponsors AB 1897 to increase refinery penalties & deter air quality violations

Assemblymember Wicks introduces bill to hold refineries accountable

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District today announced the sponsorship of AB 1897, a bill introduced today by Assemblymember Buffy Wicks to increase the penalty ceiling for refinery violations of air quality regulations.

AB 1897 increases the civil penalty ceiling for violations of state or local air quality rules, regulations and permit conditions at refineries from \$10,000 to \$30,000, if the violation results in severe disruption to the community. The bill would also make a person who violates this provision liable for a civil penalty of up to \$100,000 for a subsequent violation within a 12-month period.

“Air quality violation penalties can no longer be a ‘cost of doing business’ at Bay Area refineries,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. “This bill will provide a strong deterrent and ensure that refineries take responsibility for compliance with all local, state and federal air quality regulations to protect the health and air quality of those living in communities that surround refineries.”

“Fossil fuel companies can’t keep believing they can just ‘pay the problem away’ when their actions negatively impact the health and safety of our frontline communities,” said Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland). “The Legislature has a responsibility to Californians to take environmental justice seriously, and that includes creating financial deterrents for corporate polluters who believe they’re above the law. This bill is a necessary step toward accountability for these bad actors.”

“Residents who live in refinery communities have suffered the disproportionate impacts of air pollution for far too long,” said Contra Costa County Supervisor and Air District Board member John Gioia. “We have a responsibility to those who live in the shadows of refineries to improve their air quality and health by providing strong deterrents to harmful air quality violations.”

In the Bay Area, refineries are some of the largest sources of criteria pollutants and toxic air contaminants. Overall compliance with air quality permit requirements at the five Bay Area refineries has declined precipitously in recent years, with significant increases in flaring events, Title V permit condition deviations and Notices of Violation. Past refinery flaring events have resulted in shelter in place notifications, school closures and increased emergency room visits from residents living in communities surrounding refineries.

AB 1897 raises the civil penalty ceiling to not more than \$30,000 for refineries for violations in which a discharge results in a severe disruption to a community, the discharge contains toxic air contaminants, and 25 or more people are exposed to the discharge. The civil penalty ceiling would be raised to not more than \$100,000 for subsequent violations within a twelve-month period.

The [Bay Area Air Quality Management District](#) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

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