



NEWS RELEASE

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Air District seeks Hearing Board approval to end significant air quality violations at Valero

Action signals a major shift in the handling of enforcement cases moving forward

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District announced today that it is requesting approval of an abatement order with the agency’s independent Hearing Board to end a significant excess emissions violation by Valero Refining Co. at its Benicia refinery.

The proposed abatement order stems from a 2019 inspection that found unreported emissions of harmful organic compounds in excess of Air District regulations at Valero’s Benicia refinery. This discovery triggered a comprehensive investigation of the facility to determine the full extent of the release and resulted in a Notice of Violation for the unreported emissions.

“Valero’s disregard for air quality regulations and public safety in the surrounding community warrants decisive action and significant penalties to deter violations in the future,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. “Valero did not report or control the emissions from this source as required by Air District regulations, state and federal law, so we are requesting approval of an abatement order to provide transparency as we seek to hold Valero accountable for its actions. Violators are now on notice that ongoing air quality violations will be brought to light in a public forum in front of the Air District’s Hearing Board or state court.”

The Air District’s initial Notice of Violation required Valero to come into compliance with its regulations at their Benicia facility as safely and expeditiously as possible. The facility immediately initiated a construction project to reduce the excess emissions, but this engineering fix did not solve the problem. While the project significantly reduced emissions, it did not eliminate them. Faced with a public hearing in front of the independent Hearing Board, Valero has now agreed to the Air District’s demands to stop the remaining emissions. The Air District has filed with the Hearing Board for an abatement order that will legally bind Valero to the terms of the agreement. The Air District will also require Valero to pay a monetary penalty commensurate with the seriousness of the violation.

In addition to the abatement order, the Air District is in discussions with the US EPA to determine if federal laws were violated.

Abatement orders and cases brought before the Hearing Board allow for transparency as facts and evidence are presented in an open forum while providing an opportunity for public involvement. The public is encouraged to participate and comment when the proposed abatement order is presented to the Hearing Board. Once the hearing is scheduled, a link will be posted on the Air District’s website

at baaqmd.gov. The public can also sign up for Hearing Board updates at <https://www.baaqmd.gov/contact-us/sign-up-for-information>.

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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