



Joint Press Release
from Contra Costa County District Attorney
and the Bay Area Air District



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Joint DA-Air District Prosecution Secures \$10M From Martinez Refining Company

MARTINEZ, Calif. – A joint prosecution by the Contra Costa District Attorney and Bay Area Air District has resulted in a \$10 million penalty against Martinez Refining Company, along with compliance improvements at its Martinez refinery, and \$600,000 in mitigation payments for supplemental environmental projects.

Judge Benjamin T. Reyes, II signed the final judgment on February 18, 2026. The case involved a number of violations that occurred at MRC's refinery located at 3495 Pacheco Boulevard in the City of Martinez and unincorporated Contra Costa County between early 2020 and late 2024, including offenses under the health and safety code, business and professions code, and fish and game code.

The complaint stemmed from violations over four years, including MRC's 2022 Thanksgiving Day release of spent catalyst that covered parts of Martinez in a white ash-like substance. Other major violations included illegal flaring, fires, leaking tanks, public nuisance-level odors in downtown Martinez, and releases of "coke dust" -- a powdery oil refining byproduct -- spreading beyond the refinery's fence line onto neighboring properties. The violations are described in [163 notices of violation issued by the Air District](#).

This enforcement action does not include the February 1, 2025, fire at the MRC refinery. The Air District is addressing that incident through a separate enforcement action.

District Attorney Diana Becton said, "The residents of Martinez deserve to feel safe in their communities. This civil action holds the Martinez Refining Company accountable for numerous violations, enforces compliance with the law, and reinforces our office's dedication to protecting public health and safety through all available legal means, including civil action."

The \$10 million penalty will be distributed as follows:

- \$6.35 million to the Air District, most of which will be reinvested in beneficial projects in Martinez and the surrounding areas that were impacted by these violations under the Air District's [Community Benefits Penalty Funds Policy](#)



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- \$3.5 million to the District Attorney's Office Environmental Unit for enforcement efforts
- \$100,000 to Contra Costa Health Services
- \$50,000 to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife

In addition to the \$10 million penalty, MRC will also pay \$600,000 in mitigation payments to fund supplemental environmental projects. These payments include:

- \$450,000 for air filtration systems in public schools near the Martinez Refinery Company
- \$100,000 to the Certified Unified Program Agency for environmental regulator scholarships
- \$50,000 to Contra Costa County Fish and Game's Community Propagation Fund to enhance the county's fish and wildlife resources

Moreover, the judgment requires MRC to change how it operates its catalytic cracking unit to keep key emissions control equipment operational during startup and shutdown operations. The company is also required to install enhanced emissions monitoring systems on various other pieces of equipment.

"This enforcement action reflects significant air quality violations and makes clear that compliance with air quality laws is mandatory," said Alexander Crockett, the Air District's general counsel. "The penalty the Air District is collecting through this action [will support local and regional projects that improve air quality and public health](#) under our Community Benefits Policy. Strong enforcement ensures accountability while directing resources back to the communities most affected by pollution."

The attorneys prosecuting the case include Deputy District Attorney Bryan Tierney; Assistant District Attorney Stacey Grassini; and Air District Assistant Counsel Brian Case.

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

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