



Refinery Issues

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Martinez Mayor

Despite all the positive media coverage our plans for the waterfront has received over the past several months, I have been asked to provide a few thoughts on the elephant in the room: our ongoing issues with the Refinery.

On October 18, the City Council passed a resolution Urging the Martinez Refining Company (MRC) to Comply with Regional Air Emission Standards. You can watch the video or read the proclamation here:

https://martinez.granicus.com/player/clip/2110?view_id=9&redirect=true&h=f1d25497397d85e187f45b2812698d2c.

This proclamation was prompted by members of Healthy Martinez, a local activist group that formed following the spent catalyst release one year ago. Since that time, there have been numerous planned and unplanned flaring events and coke dust releases. There are two notice of violations that have been issued by Contra Costa Health (CC Health) and 29 notice of violations issued by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). CC Health HazMat team has ongoing coordination with MRC (and has been conducting regular inspections and audits) to monitor compliance with Industrial Safety Ordinance requirements.

We have invited MRC to present at City Council meetings and they presented for the first time at the October 18 meeting and plan to return every other month with updates on their improvements to process safety and other corrective actions. They continue to say this is not how they do business and apologize for the inconvenience. At the same time, MRC continues to be one

of the major contributors to activities and events in the City. I continue to push MRC to be a good neighbor first and foremost, and to look at ways to partner with our community to give back in more meaningful, environmentally focused, ways.

Transparency in government and keeping the community informed is so very important to me, so I have continued to push for communications with the surrounding community. But, the hardest part of this process has been communicating why the sirens aren't going off! These events, while stressful and with a clear negative impact on the City of Martinez and surroundings, have been deemed only Level 1 events by the County. Level 1s are identified when offsite health consequences are not expected: (https://cchealth.org/hazmat/pdf/notification_flowchart.pdf and https://cchealth.org/hazmat/pdf/incident_notification_policy.pdf).

There are hundreds of Level 1 alerts in the County each year, and the information is merely posted to their social media feeds. Clearly, this notification system has failed our residents. While we were able to convince the County that Level 2 alerts should also be sent as push notifications (went live in May!), Level 1 alerts were still limited to social media posts and our community continued to be underinformed on events at the Refinery. That is why following the coke dust release in July, our city-specific notification system Martinez Alerts went live to keep our community aware of low-level releases and issues at the refinery (and other information pertinent to resident safety).

But with more information and knowledge, comes more awareness and more frustration. What can you do? I encourage you to attend our council meetings when MRC does their updates and ask questions to stay informed. Continue to report any dust you observe on your cars or property to <https://www.baaqmd.gov/online-services/air-pollution-complaints> or call MRC's community inquiry phone number at 925-313-3777 or 925-313-3601 during off work hours.

Lastly, I have started working with the BAAQMD to push for the installation of the long-awaited air monitoring station in Martinez. You may have noticed that MRC's real time fence line monitors (<https://www.fenceline.org/martinez/index.php>) monitor for hazardous gasses such as benzene and sulfur dioxide, but it does not include particular matter, the subject of concern with respect to spent catalyst, PM2.5, and coke dust. We hope the installation of a BAAQMD air monitoring station will address this issue. You can join BAAQMD board meetings and speak out during public comment to encourage them to speed up the process of installation: <https://www.baaqmd.gov/about-the-air-district/board-of-directors/resolutionsagendasminutes>.

At this time, all eyes are on the December 21 court hearing between MRC and BAAQMD regarding Rule 6-5 and wet gas scrubber installation (read the proclamation for more information!). The outcome of this case, whether it goes to court or they reach a settlement, will inform air emissions in the City of Martinez for years to come.

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