



Torrance Refinery Action Alliance

FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND LAWSUIT TO PHASE OUT DEADLY HF AT 2 REFINERIES, GIVES HOPE

ON 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TORRANCE REFINERY EXPLOSION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Press conference on Saturday February 15, 1pm Torrance Transit Center 465 Crenshaw Blvd, Torrance

Two major developments in the 10-year battle in Torrance to phase out deadly hydrofluoric acid (HF/MHF) from the PBF Torrance refinery and the Valero refinery in Wilmington. (Background on the danger posed to workers and community provided below)

1. **Congresswoman Maxine Waters** will bring us up to date on her federal legislation to phase out HF. The Congresswoman will speak and take questions at the press conference on **Saturday February 15, 1pm Torrance Transit Center 465 Crenshaw Blvd, Torrance.**
2. Additionally, **National Resources Defense Council**, this Tuesday Feb 12, filed a petition with the EPA on behalf of Communities for a Better Environment based the other HF refinery in Wilmington. It is expected that this petition will be followed by a lawsuit to require a rapid phase out of HF to a commercially proven alternative of which there are several.

The press conference will be held at the start of the event on February 15th at 1pm to mark the 10th anniversary of the Torrance Refinery explosion. That explosion nearly resulted in a mass casualty event on February 18, 2015. The public is invited to attend the event to be held at the New Torrance Transit Center 465 Crenshaw Blvd, Torrance Refinery Action Alliance. The event will feature a Disaster Mini-Film Festival including a highly regarding documentary short by a local film maker and an major announcement about a documentary series on “HF a hidden national threat” now in production with an award winning documentarian. Speakers, including representatives of numerous elected officials, environmental organizations, as well as, local residents will be available for interviews.

Background

Ten years ago, residents in the South Bay/Harbor area witnessed a near catastrophic accident when an explosion took place on property of the Torrance refinery. Heavy debris from the explosion fell short of releasing thousands of pounds of pressurized Modified Hydrofluoric Acid (MHF) – a release that would have put the lives of refinery workers and residents within 6 miles of the refinery in jeopardy.

In those ten years one thing remained the same; the Torrance Refinery still uses MHF in its refining processes needlessly endangering workers, school children, pets, endangered species, highly skilled irreplaceable workforces. MHF is a highly toxic chemical that is used to make high-octane gasoline. It can form a dense ground-hugging cloud that poses mortal danger to anyone who comes in contact with it. Even a small accidental release of MHF during refinery operations could be catastrophic and result in mass casualties. Only two refineries in the State of California continue to use MHF – the Torrance Refinery and the Valero Refinery in Wilmington, while multiple safe alternatives are available

However, much has changed also – much that gives concerned residents cause for hope.

When the February 2015 explosion occurred at the Torrance Refinery the only commercially available alternative to the use of MHF in the refining of high-octane gasoline was sulfuric acid, the catalyst used by California's other refineries. Sulfuric acid poses its own risks, but since it cannot form a vapor at ambient temperatures. All credible experts agree it does not pose the catastrophic risk posed by MHF.

In the intervening years other alkylation processes have been developed and implemented. Processes that have been deemed vastly safer than Sulfuric Acid – e.g., Five years ago Chevron's ISOALKY ionic liquid process replace Hydrofluoric Acid in a Chevron refinery in Salt Lake City. There are other such technologies deemed by the American Petroleum Institute to be "commercially proven"

In 2019 the SCAQMD halted their attempt at writing a rule to require the phase out of MHF at these two refineries but stipulated they would periodically review new technologies to determine whether to mandate the phase out of MHF in favor of one of those new technologies. In 2022, SCAQMD staff reported favorably on two of these proven alternatives.

EPA in March of 2024 released a revision to the Risk Management Program as part of the Clean Air Act, requiring the consideration of these available alternatives, but failed to require conversion.

In these ten years support for transitioning to safer alkylation technologies has grown. Congressmembers Ted Lieu, Nannette Barragan, Robert Garcia along with 7 other representatives have co-sponsored the bill with Rep Maxine Waters. Letters of support for conversion have been submitted by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi; Senator Ben Allen; Karen Bass and other local and national leaders as well as number of local Cities, including Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach, and Carson have supported transition, as well as numerous local City of LA Neighborhood Councils, Homeowner Associations, local environmental justice organizations and major unions such SEIU, ILWU and Teacher associations have called for changing to a vastly safer commercially proven alternative.

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved Supervisor Janice Hahn's (4th District) motion authorizing a "five-signature letter from the Board of Supervisors to Governor Newsom and Attorney General Rob Bonta calling on the State to take all possible actions to require refineries in California to convert from MHF to safer alternatives," and "directing the County of Los Angeles to support any new State or Federal legislation that requires refineries to convert from MHF to safer alternatives. AG Bonta responded by championing a letter to the EPA from 21 AGs urging conversion to an alternative.

While residents recognize that the Torrance Refinery and the Valero Refinery in Wilmington will need to continue producing gasoline and jet fuel, momentum continues to build for phasing out MHF in favor of a proven, commercially available alternative.

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ABOUT THE TORRANCE REFINERY ACTION ALLIANCE, INC.

Now a 501(c)(4) social welfare nonprofit, TRAA was formed after an explosion on February 18, 2015, at the ExxonMobil Torrance Refinery (now PBF Energy's Torrance Refining Company) rocked Torrance and rained pollutant dust downwind for miles. It continues to meet regular and provide the public with information about the threat of HF/MHF and the availability of alternatives.

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