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Air District releases preliminary health risk assessment for Chevron Refinery in Richmond

Assessment opens public comment and starts the process to require Chevron to reduce health risks

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air District today released a [preliminary health risk assessment](#) from air pollution for the Chevron Refinery in Richmond. It found the estimated cancer and short-term health risks from air emissions for people living near the refinery were above the allowed levels, which requires Chevron to implement a plan to reduce health risk. The public comment period closes on **Monday, November 23 at 5 p.m.**

The assessment estimates a maximum cancer risk of 37 in a million, which means 37 additional chances in a million of developing cancer over a lifetime of exposure. The Air District requires facilities to act if that risk equals or exceeds 10 in a million. The assessment also found short-term non-cancer health risk above the threshold, driven by one-hour exposures. Long-term risk of non-cancer health effects fell below the threshold.

“These findings give the Richmond community clear, science-based information about the health risks from refinery air pollution emissions,” said Dr. Philip Fine, executive officer of the Air District. “This is exactly why Rule 11-18 exists: to identify health risks and require facilities to reduce them. Community input is essential before we finalize this assessment because the people who live closest to the refinery have the most at stake.”

The Air District will review every comment it receives and may revise the assessment, which could raise or lower the risk estimates. If the findings of this preliminary assessment are confirmed, Chevron must submit a plan to bring them below the thresholds or install the best available retrofit pollution controls. The public will be able to comment on Chevron’s plan as well. The Air District will host a public meeting in Richmond to explain the findings and the comment process on **Monday, September 21 at 5:30 p.m.** at Richmond Memorial Auditorium & Convention Center – Lobby (403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA).

Most of the cancer risk, about 74 percent, comes from a single pollutant: benzo[a]pyrene. It escapes through small leaks at pipe fittings and storage tanks across the refinery. The short-term risk has a different source: benzene evaporating from the refinery's wastewater treatment system. One piece of equipment, the bio-reactor, accounts for more than 80 percent of that risk. Long-term exposure to benzo[a]pyrene may increase cancer risk and harm the developmental, reproductive and immune systems. Brief exposure to benzene may cause temporary eye, nose, throat and lung irritation, headaches, dizziness, and other health effects.

The Chevron Refinery has operated in Richmond since 1902 and covers roughly 2,900 acres along the San Francisco Bay. The Air District adopted Rule 11-18 in 2017 and set the most stringent risk thresholds in the nation. The rule requires the Air District to study emissions at facilities that may pose elevated risk, then requires those facilities to cut the pollution driving that risk. To learn more about the 11-18 program and the health risk assessment process, visit the [Rule 11-18 Facilities webpage](#).

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

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