



NEWS RELEASE



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
CALIFORNIA LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Draft state report outlines steps to improve safety at California's oil refineries

Note: A teleconference call with administration officials to discuss the report is at 1:30 PM (PDT) today. FOR ACCREDITED PRESS ONLY. The call in number is 888-324-3866. The passcode is "Refinery Safety".

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SACRAMENTO -- Today the State's Interagency Working Group on Refinery Safety released its draft report outlining steps and recommendations to improve public and worker safety at and near the state's oil refineries.

The Interagency Working Group, composed of thirteen agencies and departments and the Governor's office, was formed following the fire at Chevron's Richmond oil refinery last August. The fire created a vaporized plume that spread to surrounding communities.

The Working Group met over eight months to examine ways to improve public and worker safety through enhanced oversight of refineries, and to strengthen emergency preparedness in anticipation of any future incident. Regular internal meetings were informed by meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders including those from industry, labor, community and environmental groups, academic institutions, and local emergency response units.

The report includes a frank assessment of the current state of refinery safety with input from stakeholders, a study by the RAND Corporation, and findings by the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal OSHA), the U.S. Chemical Safety Board, and Chevron's own internal investigation.

Recommendations of the working group include:

- Create an Interagency Refinery Task Force by September 1, 2013, housed within the California Environmental Protection Agency, to coordinate agencies' activities and carry out the recommended actions
- As directed by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), local emergency response agencies should take a number of measures to strengthen and better coordinate emergency response efforts including the creation of refinery-specific provisions within local Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Area Plans for refinery incidents, with aligned radio communications among response officials, and required joint drills and exercises, to improve local emergency response.
- Strengthen existing regulations, and develop new regulations and practices to address the underlying causes of safety problems including, but not limited to, these measures: inherently safer systems, periodic assessments of safety culture, complete root-cause analysis after significant accidents or releases; and, accounting for 'human factors' to manage and reduce error and improve emergency response.



- Ensure public input in developing plans for responding to emergencies involving the release of toxic chemicals.
- Improve alerts and public access to information during emergency events, and enhance the presentation and availability of air monitoring information for the general public.

The report also recommends enhanced enforcement and increased worker involvement in improving the methods and culture of safety at refineries.

“Getting the Interagency Refinery Task Force up and running will be our top priority,” said Cal/EPA Secretary Matt Rodriguez. “We want to put the recommendations of the report into effect as soon as possible to protect worker and public safety at the state’s refineries.”

“The Interagency Refinery Task Force will strengthen the ability of Cal/OSHA and other state and local agencies to protect workers and communities from refinery related accidents,” said Labor & Workforce Development Agency Secretary Marty Morgenstern.

“Working together we have formulated innovative strategies to improve our oversight of refinery safety,” said Department of Industrial Relations Director Christine Baker. “Our recommendations are grounded in the experiences and insights of workers, labor representatives, community members, and the refinery industry.”

The Governor’s office has already directed relevant agencies to begin the process of regulatory change for actions identified in this report.

Action on several recommendations is already underway, including preparations to finalize the fee structure to be charged to support an additional 15 Cal/OSHA inspector positions, as well as additional ancillary personnel, funded in the current state budget to review refinery operations and other chemical plants under the process safety management program.

Additionally, the California Air Resources Board, in collaboration with the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association, will release a report developed in parallel with the Interagency Working Group report focused on toxic air contaminant monitoring to improve knowledge and information sharing for air data in the event of an incident.

Future coordination and implementation of the recommendations will ultimately be led by the Interagency Refinery Task Force in Cal/EPA.

“Improving Public and Worker Safety at Oil Refineries”, the draft report of the Interagency Working Group on Refinery Safety, can be seen at: www.calepa.ca.gov/Publications/Reports/2013/Refineries.pdf

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