

For Immediate Release
April 7, 2017

CONTACT: Sam Atwood, SCAQMD
Tues-Fri, 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.: (909) 396-3687
After hours and weekends: (909)720-9056

South Coast Air Quality Management District
Announces Sweeping Air Toxics Action Plan

SCAQMD officials today announced a far-reaching initiative to expand its ongoing regulation of toxic air pollution by assessing toxic emissions associated with hundreds of metal-processing facilities in the region. Any facilities found to be emitting high levels of toxic metals will be required to reduce them quickly.

“SCAQMD has many existing rules and programs in place to protect the public from harmful toxic emissions,” said SCAQMD Executive Office Wayne Natri. “However our recent discovery of high emissions of hexavalent chromium from two facilities in Paramount has led us to develop an intensive air toxics initiative. Our goal is to eliminate or minimize the release of hexavalent chrome into the environment associated with metal-processing facilities.”

The Air Toxics Action Plan is expected to be a seven-year, labor-intensive effort with the air monitoring portion costing approximately \$6 million to \$7 million annually. It will focus on the approximately 1,100 metal processing facilities across SCAQMD’s four-county jurisdiction with the potential to emit toxic metal contaminants including hexavalent chromium, lead, arsenic, cadmium and nickel.

Under the initiative, SCAQMD will systematically identify and prioritize high-risk facilities, then use the latest air monitoring technology to confirm specific sources causing high emissions.

If high-risk facilities are identified, SCAQMD will take actions to ensure these facilities reduce their emissions to a level that does not pose an immediate threat to public health.

As it has done in Paramount, SCAQMD will engage and communicate regularly about its work with residents, community groups, local governments and their elected officials, partner regulatory agencies, affected facilities and industry groups. SCAQMD will seek to leverage the regulatory authorities of other agencies to assist in swiftly curtailing emissions from high-emitting facilities.

Advanced air monitoring activities are effective at identifying high emitters but are also costly. Deploying just two air monitors near a facility costs about \$6,000 per week, including all costs for monitoring and analysis. SCAQMD has spent an estimated \$700,000 since last fall on its intensive air monitoring efforts in Paramount.

While the agency’s rules allow for recovery of some monitoring costs at high-emitting facilities, SCAQMD officials will be seeking additional funding from the state to fully implement the air toxics initiative.

Meanwhile, the agency is working to amend its existing rules for facilities that emit hexavalent chromium, a known carcinogen. The proposed new measures reflect SCAQMD’s discovery of metal-related processes that were previously unknown to industry and the scientific community to be sources of hexavalent chromium emissions.

For example, SCAQMD discovered last fall that Aerocraft Heat Treating Co. was emitting high levels of hexavalent chromium from certain processes even though the facility does not do chrome plating or chrome anodizing, nor does it use chrome paints.

Finally, SCAQMD is seeking additional legal authority from the state Legislature to require facilities emitting very high levels of toxic air contaminants to immediately curtail or cease operations.

Although SCAQMD responded rapidly to its findings in Paramount, the agency currently lacks the legal authority to enact immediate remedies for facilities posing a threat to public health without first going to court or to the independent SCAQMD Hearing Board. This can be a lengthy process, taking anywhere from days to months, to secure an Order for Abatement requiring a facility to curtail its emissions. The alternative, seeking an injunction in Superior Court, also can be time-consuming.

To facilitate a more rapid response, SCAQMD has sponsored legislation this year (AB 1132 – C. Garcia) to allow the executive officer to issue an Order for Abatement pending a hearing before the Hearing Board, if it is determined that a facility violation presents an imminent and substantial endangerment to the public health or welfare or the environment. The bill is scheduled for its first legislative hearing later this month in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

Last fall, through an exhaustive and fast-paced investigation, SCAQMD found that Aerocraft Heat Treating Co. and Anaplex Corp. were sources of high levels of hexavalent chromium emissions. SCAQMD obtained Orders for Abatement for both facilities. Under terms of the orders, Aerocraft has idled all equipment and processes with the potential for emitting hexavalent chromium four times, and Anaplex has curtailed operations once. Each curtailment has lasted approximately one week.

The SCAQMD is the air pollution control agency for Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.