



NEWS

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Air District Board approves groundbreaking Portland cement rule

SAN FRANCISCO - Yesterday the Air District's Board of Directors voted unanimously to approve a new rule containing the strictest limits in the nation on existing Portland cement manufacturing facilities, such as the Lehigh facility in Cupertino.

Regulation 9, Rule 13 includes strict emissions limits for nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and toxic air contaminants, such as mercury, benzene and hydrochloric acid. The rule also includes new continuous emissions monitoring, recordkeeping, reporting and operational requirements, such as dust mitigation measures.

"This action will significantly reduce toxic air pollution and better protect community health in the neighborhoods near Lehigh," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. "This new Portland cement rule is the strongest of its kind in the country."

Under the new rule, all emissions at the facility must be monitored and must not pose a significant threat to the neighboring community, as demonstrated by a health risk assessment.

The rule is expected to lead to dramatic reductions in toxic emissions at the Lehigh facility, such as a 93 percent reduction in mercury emissions, a 90 percent reduction in benzene and a 70 percent drop in hydrochloric acid. The rule will also generate a significant reduction in emissions of NOx, which is an ozone precursor.

Regulation 9, Rule 13: Nitrogen Oxides, Particulate Matter and Toxic Air Contaminants from Portland Cement Manufacturing was passed following a three-hour hearing by the Air District's Board. The Board resolved additionally to direct staff to evaluate the feasibility of more stringent Portland cement manufacturing emission standards and report back to the Board in the future.

A public workshop on the rule was held last December 12 in Cupertino, and the Air District Board conducted a special meeting in Cupertino on May 21. Comments received were considered in preparing the final regulation.

Portland cement manufacturing involves the intense heating of raw materials such as limestone and iron in order to fuse them together to produce cement clinker. The clinker is then ground to a fine powder and mixed with gypsum and other additives to produce cement. There are 10 Portland cement facilities in California, and one in the Bay Area - the Lehigh facility in Cupertino.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (www.baaqmd.gov) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area.

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