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**CONTACT:** [communications@baaqmd.gov](mailto:communications@baaqmd.gov)

## **Air District seeks abatement order for extensive air quality violations at Valero**

*Requested abatement order would require the refinery to install pollution control equipment*

**SAN FRANCISCO** – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District announced today that it is seeking an abatement order from the agency’s independent Hearing Board to require Valero Refining Co. to cease ongoing violations of Air District regulations at its Benicia refinery.

The Air District is seeking an abatement order to require Valero to install pollution control equipment on eight pressure relief devices, or PRDs, installed on the refinery’s hydrogen compressor unit. PRDs are safety devices used to prevent extreme overpressures that could cause catastrophic equipment failure – not unlike the pressure relief valve on a home pressure cooker, but on an industrial scale.

Air District regulations require pollution control equipment to be installed on PRDs that experience two or more releases within five years. Valero’s PRDs have been subject to these requirements for years, and in some cases for over a decade, but Valero has failed to install the required pollution control equipment.

“The extensive violations discovered at Valero’s Benicia refinery are of great concern and the Air District is seeking an abatement order to ensure that Valero takes action to prevent harmful emissions from impacting the communities surrounding the refinery,” said Alexander Crockett, the Air District’s chief counsel. “Our priority is to protect the health and well-being of our communities, and we will vigorously pursue enforcement measures to achieve cleaner and safer air for all residents of the Bay Area.”

PRDs release emissions during upset conditions and not on a day-to-day basis. However, when PRDs releases do occur, the emissions go directly to the atmosphere unless they are captured and/or abated. The Air District is seeking this abatement order to require abatement equipment to prevent emissions from going into the atmosphere if and when any PRDs do experience releases.

Air District staff discovered these PRD violations in connection with an investigation into a series of widespread violations involving Valero’s hydrogen system, including extensive emissions from a hydrogen vent for which the Hearing Board issued an abatement order in 2022. Valero is required to report releases from its hydrogen system PRDs to the Air District, but it failed to do

so for over ten years. As a result, these ongoing violations did not come to light until the Air District conducted further investigations after it found the hydrogen vent violations.

The Air District's Hearing Board is an independent tribunal created by state law with the power to order violators to cease operating until they come into compliance with Air District regulations. Hearing Board proceedings are open to the public, and the public is encouraged to participate and comment when the Hearing Board holds a hearing to consider issuing the requested abatement order. Once the hearing is scheduled, a link will be posted on the Air District's website at [www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov). The public can also sign up for Hearing Board updates at <https://www.baaqmd.gov/contact-us/sign-up-for-information>.

The Hearing Board is not empowered to impose monetary penalties for violations of Air District regulations. The Air District will take separate enforcement action to assess penalties for these violations to the maximum extent provided for by law. The purpose of this abatement order request is to seek an order requiring Valero to cease its ongoing violations with respect to these PRDs and immediately come into compliance.

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

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*Air District Communications Office*  
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