

Air District Update to CEQA Thresholds of Significance for Greenhouse Gases

Environmental Justice
and Equity Focus Group
November 2021



BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT

How to Use

Black menu bar at top or bottom of screen:



Audio

Please mute yourself when not speaking

Video

Participants

- See others
- Rename yourself (Name and Group/Agency Affiliation if applicable)
- Raise hand (remember to lower)

Chat Feature

To provide questions and or comments when chat is enabled

Reaction

Raise hand, give thumbs up or applaud



Virtual Participation Principles

One person speaks at a time

Please mute when not speaking

Respect all opinions

Agenda



INTRODUCTIONS
& COMMUNITY
DIALOGUE



PRESENTATION



QUESTIONS,
ANSWERS &
DISCUSSION



CLOSING &
NEXT STEPS



Introduction and Community Dialogue

- Share your name and organization
- Why did you choose to join us today?



Objectives

- Share foundational CEQA knowledge in preparation for the public workshop on December 9th.
- Provide information on draft proposal for updating the Air District's CEQA Thresholds of Significance for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Receive feedback on the presented concepts.





Presentation + Q&A

Presentation:

CEQA Foundations

OUTLINE

- What is CEQA?
- Determining a Significant Impact
- Air District Roles in CEQA

What is CEQA?

The **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)** requires government agencies to consider the environmental consequences of their actions before approving a project.

The purpose of CEQA is to:

- **Inform** decisionmakers and the public about the potential environmental effects of proposed projects
- **Identify** ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced
- **Prevent** significant, avoidable environmental damage by requiring mitigation and project alternatives
- **Disclose** to the public reasons why a project was approved if there will be significant and unavoidable impacts



Determining a Significant Impact

- A significant impact occurs when a project would cause a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment.
- Thresholds of significance help lead agencies determine whether a project may cause adverse environmental impacts.
- The Air District provides recommended air quality and greenhouse gas emissions thresholds to assist lead agencies with CEQA.
- Lead agencies have the discretion to set their own thresholds.



Air District Roles in CEQA

The Air District acts as a:

- **Lead agency** when it has the primary authority to implement or approve a project.
- **Responsible agency** when it has limited discretionary authority over a portion of a project.
- **Commenting agency** when it has concerns about the air quality or greenhouse gas impacts of a proposed project.

The Air District supports lead agencies with CEQA by:

- Establishing **thresholds** of significance for air quality and greenhouse gas emissions
- Providing **guidance** on methodology and best practices
- Developing **tools** to assist practitioners with the analysis



Presentation:

Update to the Greenhouse Gas Thresholds of Significance

OUTLINE

- What is driving the update
- Land use project thresholds
- Stationary Source thresholds
- Plan-level thresholds
- Next Steps

What is driving this CEQA Thresholds update?

Things have changed since we adopted the 2010 thresholds...

- New State GHG Targets
 - AB 32's 2020 targets replaced by SB 32; 2017 Scoping Plan sets 2030 targets
- EO B-55-18: Carbon neutrality as soon as possible; no later than 2045
- Local governments are asking us to update our GHG thresholds to support their planning
- Evolving case law



Proposed changes: Land Use Projects

(Proposed changes are BOLD)

Pollutant	Current	Proposed (Must include A or B)
GHGs	1,100 MT/yr OR compliance with qualified GHG strategy, OR 4.6 MT/SP/yr (residents + employees)	<p>A. Projects must include, at a minimum, the following project design elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. No natural gas (residential and non-residential) 2) Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Electric Vehicle (EV) charging b. Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) reductions <p>B. Be consistent with a local GHG Reduction Strategy that meets the criteria under the CEQA Guidelines section 15183.5(b), and pursuant to Air District guidance.</p>



Buildings & Transportation



Proposed changes: Stationary Sources

(Proposed changes are bolded)

Pollutant	Current	Proposed
GHGs	10,000 MT/yr	Compliance with Cap-and-Trade <u>OR</u> 2,000 MT/yr



Typical Stationary Source



Proposed changes: Plan Level

(Proposed changes are BOLD)

Pollutant	Current	Proposed (Must include A and B)
GHGs	Compliance with Qualified GHG Reduction Strategy OR 6.6 MT CO ₂ e per service population per year	A. Meets State's goals to achieve 40% emissions below 1990 levels by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2045; <u>AND</u> B. Meets criteria for GHG reduction strategy under the State CEQA Guidelines, and pursuant to Air District's guidance



Greenhouse Gas Thresholds of Significance Update Timeline



CEQA Practitioner Focus Groups – Aug & Sept 2021



Air District Committee Meeting – Sept 2021



Equity / Environmental Justice Focus Group – Today



Public workshop – December 9, 2021



Air District Board – February or March 2022

Lead Agency Support Activities (beyond CEQA)

Encourage lead agencies to consider environmental justice in land use planning

- Co-develop with community a *new* CEQA Guidelines chapter on Environmental Justice
- Share SB 1000 policy tools/examples
- Support local government develop EJ Elements and General Plan Updates
- Promote healthy and equitable developments and land use practices

Focus Group Discussion

