



NEWS RELEASE

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New Regulations Improve Safety at Oil Refineries

Sacramento — State agencies today announced final approval of new regulations to strengthen workplace and environmental safety at oil refineries across the state. The regulations take effect on October 1, 2017.

The regulations implement key recommendations of the Governor's Interagency Working Group on Refinery Safety, created after the Aug. 6, 2012 Chevron refinery fire. They are the result of a multi-year effort, including extensive public input and consultation with workers, industry, non-governmental organizations, local agencies, and communities.

Developed by the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), the regulations make California refineries safer for both workers and surrounding communities.

"California now leads the nation in protecting the safety and health of refinery workers and people in nearby communities," said David M. Lanier, Secretary of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency.

The new regulations overhaul [Cal/OSHA worker safety regulations as they apply to refineries](#) and the [California Accidental Release Prevention program \(CalARP\)](#), which is designed to prevent the accidental release of hazardous substances that could harm public health and the environment.

"These new regulations increase overall preparedness, provide greater accountability and implement a nation-leading approach to public safety and emergency prevention at refineries," said California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Director Mark Ghilarducci.

“The goal of these regulations is to hold refineries accountable for the safety of workers and communities,” said Matthew Rodriguez, California Secretary for Environmental Protection. “Thanks to input from refinery workers, industry leaders and environmental and community organizations, we can better anticipate problems and prevent accidents that might pose serious risks to the public and environment.”

Key features of the regulations include:

- Increased employer accountability for the mechanical integrity of refinery equipment
- Requirements to adopt inherently safer designs and systems to the greatest extent feasible
- Increased employee involvement in all aspects of the safety and prevention program
- Periodic workplace safety culture assessments to evaluate whether management is appropriately emphasizing safety over production pressures
- Authority for refinery personnel to shut down a unit, if needed, in the event of an unsafe condition or emergency and provisions for anonymous reporting of safety hazards
- Requirements for investigations to determine root causes of any incidents that occur and develop interim and permanent corrective measures in response
- Annual public reporting of refinery safety metrics under CalARP

California has 15 oil refineries, most of which are located in densely populated areas of Los Angeles and the eastern San Francisco Bay Area. During the past decade, many of these refineries have adopted some of the practices outlined above and have seen significant improvement in safety performance as a result.

However, the industry still experiences major incidents that pose a significant risk to refinery workers and nearby communities. For example, a February 2015 explosion at the Torrance refinery sent ash raining down on nearby communities and shut down most of the facility for more than a year. Unplanned incidents at refineries also cause disruptions to fuel supplies that are estimated to cost Californians an average of \$800 million a year.

Following the 2012 [Chevron refinery fire](#), Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. called for an Interagency Working Group to examine ways to improve public and worker safety through enhanced oversight of refineries and strengthen emergency preparedness in anticipation of any future incident. The Working Group consisted of participants from 13 agencies and departments, as well as the Governor’s office.

Over an eight-month period, the Working Group met with multiple stakeholders, including representatives from industry, labor, communities, the environment, academia, and local emergency response. It also worked closely with the Contra Costa County Health Services Hazardous Materials Division, which implements an industrial safety ordinance that served as a model for the refinery safety regulations. In February 2014 the Working Group issued a final [report](#) with recommendations to improve safety practices at refineries and develop more reliable and effective emergency response plans. The regulations implement one of four key recommendations of the final report.

California now has an [Interagency Refinery Task Force](#), headed by CalEPA with participation from DIR, its division Cal/OSHA, and 11 other federal, state, and local agencies and departments. The task force works collaboratively to achieve the highest possible level of safety for refinery workers and local communities, and prepare for and effectively respond to emergencies if they occur.

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