



South Coast Air Quality Management District

21865 Copley Drive, Diamond Bar, CA 91765-4178
(909) 396-2000 • www.aqmd.gov

NEWS

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**CONTACT: Tina Cox at SCAQMD
Tues-Fri, 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.: (909) 396-3456
After hours and weekends: (909) 720-7063**

SCAQMD Requires Hixson Metal in Newport Beach to Notify Public of Health Risks from its Operations

Hixson Must Also Further Reduce Toxic Emissions and Risk to Community

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has required Hixson Metal Finishing to further reduce its emissions and to notify nearby residents and businesses of the health risks due to toxic emissions from their operation.

SCAQMD has also rejected a proposed risk reduction plan from Hixson, finding it inadequate and in need of more aggressive measures to better control emissions and adequately reduce the level of health risk to the community.

“While Hixson has taken steps to reduce its toxic emissions and emissions have gone down, the health risk to the surrounding community remains at unacceptable levels,” said Barry Wallerstein, SCAQMD’s Executive Officer. “Additional controls are needed and needed quickly.”

This month, SCAQMD finalized a health risk assessment from Hixson Metal Finishing, a chrome anodizing facility located at 817-853 Production Pl. in Newport Beach. The assessment uses scientific tools to estimate the cancer and non-cancer risk to the public due to air emissions from the facility. Based on its estimated health risk to the community, Hixson is now required to notify nearby residents and businesses of the cancer risk due to the hexavalent chromium emissions from its operation. Hexavalent chromium is a compound released during metal anodizing and finishing operations and is a known human carcinogen.

In a related action, SCAQMD has found Hixson’s proposed plan to reduce toxic emissions at its facility and risk to the community inadequate and rejected the plan. Hixson is now required to address SCAQMD concerns and asked to resubmit a revised plan by June 8, 2015.

SCAQMD will also seek to amend a May 2014 order by the agency’s independent Hearing Board to require Hixson to expeditiously take all necessary steps to reduce its emissions and health risk to the community.

Background

In 2011, based on results of SCAQMD's air monitoring near Hixson, SCAQMD issued two Prop. 65 notices due to the health hazard posed by the facility's toxic emissions. Subsequently, SCAQMD initiated efforts to have Hixson add additional air pollution controls and take other measures to control and reduce its emissions.

In 2012 and 2013, additional air monitoring data revealed that hexavalent chromium emissions were still unacceptably high and SCAQMD issued a third Prop. 65 notice in February 2014. In April 2014, Hixson was required to prepare a health risk assessment to estimate the health risk associated with their toxic emissions. SCAQMD also sought an order from its independent Hearing Board to require Hixson to reduce its toxic emissions on an expedited schedule and the order was issued in May 2014.

In November 2014, Hixson submitted its health risk assessment which showed a residential maximum cancer risk of 407 in 1 million, based on hexavalent chromium emissions measured in 2013. SCAQMD reviewed and revised Hixson's health risk assessment using the same 2013 emission levels and the state's recently updated risk assessment guidelines that incorporate a better understanding of children's increased risk from cancer-causing compounds and assuming a lifetime exposure of 30 years. Hixson's revised health risk assessment shows a residential maximum cancer risk of 1,502 in 1 million. Hexavalent chromium levels measured around Hixson have been reduced significantly since the 2013 emission levels used in the health risk assessment, but are still at an unacceptable level.

SCAQMD requires facilities to notify the public and hold a public meeting if a health risk assessment shows a cancer risk exceeds 10 in 1 million. If a facility's cancer risk exceeds 25 in 1 million, the facility is also required to prepare and submit a risk reduction plan, outlining how the health risk will be reduced.

Based on the community risk from its operation, Hixson was also required to submit a risk reduction plan to show how emissions at the facility would be reduced. Hixson failed to submit the plan by the December 2014 deadline and SCAQMD issued a notice of violation to Hixson in February 2015 for failure to submit the plan, which Hixson later submitted in March 2015.

SCAQMD has conducted numerous inspections at the facility and used air monitoring data to help identify possible emission sources and mitigation measures that could help Hixson to further reduce its emissions. SCAQMD will continue to conduct air monitoring near Hixson to evaluate hexavalent chromium emissions from the facility and take all necessary steps to require Hixson to reduce its toxic emissions and risk.

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