

# Air board *AIR POLLUTION* OKs tight controls

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**WATSONVILLE** — The Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District Board Wednesday voted to slap tight emission restrictions on industrial facilities in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties.

The new controls, which were tentatively approved following an afternoon hearing at Watsonville City Hall, are aimed at regulating so-called "toxic air contaminants," and are the first of their kind in the state. The new rules are slated for final approval next month.

Toxic air contaminants include a wide range of chemical pollutants considered hazardous to human health. Many are known to be carcinogens — cancer-causing agents. Up till now, the emission of most toxic air contaminants has not been routinely regulated by the air pollution district because they do not contribute significantly to smog.

The district staff has dealt with such emissions only in response to specific complaints.

Under the new regulations approved by the air board Wednesday, operators of new industrial facilities, and existing facilities undergoing major modifications or expansions would be routinely required to install devices to curb the emission of toxic air contaminants.

Industrialists would be required to

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reduce the emission of carcinogenic pollutants to the point that less than one in a million persons in the vicinity of their facilities would run the risk of contracting cancer from exposure to the emissions.

The new regulations would slap much tougher restrictions on hourly emissions of both carcinogenic and non-carcinogenic toxic air contaminants than existing federal and state standards. Locally, emissions exceeding 1/420 of so-called "permissible exposure limits" for various toxic air contaminants would be barred.

The permissible exposure limit for such contaminants is defined as the amount to which most workers can be exposed daily over their working lifetimes without suffering detectable adverse health effects.

Gasoline stations and dry cleaning businesses would be exempt from the new emission controls.

Santa Cruz County Supervisors Gary Patton and Robley Levy joined with Monterey County Supervisors Marc Del Piero and Sam Karas to approve the new restrictions. San Benito County Supervisor Rocky Lydon and Monterey County Supervisor Dusan Petrovic abstained. Barbara Shipnuck, the other Monterey County supervisor on the air pollution board, was absent.

Wednesday's vote capped several months of debate over the new rule and came on the heels of conflicting recommendations from the air district's sharply split citizens advisory committee.

The advisory panel voted 7-6 last week to recommend approval of the new restrictions, with some softening modifications. The panel majority's recommended changes were ignored by the air district board.

In a separate report, the panel minority urged rejection of the new pollution rules, saying they would be expensive to enforce and would "not make any material difference to the air quality standards already enjoyed by the community."

The panel minority also called the proposed new restrictions a wasteful duplication of state and federal regulatory efforts.

Air Pollution District Executive Officer Larry Odle called the minority's assertions "fallacious" Wednesday.

"We are preventing any increased risk in the future (from) toxics and carcinogenic compounds," he said.

"If you count reductions in the increase in air pollution in the future as an improvement," Odle told the board, "then obviously, there is an improvement in air quality (as a result of the new restrictions)."

Odle said the new rules would not duplicate state and federal regulations because it is ultimately the local district's responsibility to issue or deny permits here. And, he said, there are no state guidelines to follow where toxic air contaminants are concerned.

Furthermore, Odle said, though the problem of toxic air contaminants has been under review by the state for three years, state officials have yet to produce any proposals to regulate them.

Critics of the new emission restrictions had warned that the new rules, if imposed, would drive industry and jobs out of the Monterey Bay area. They had also called the rules' emission ceilings unrealistically low.

An air district staffer countered Wednesday that there is no safe emission level where carcinogens are concerned.

Running down a list of carcinogenic toxic air contaminants, the staffer, Doug Quetin, identified a dozen which are not now routinely regulated by the air pollution district because they do not contribute significantly to smog. Among the pollutants singled out by Quetin were asbestos, carbon tetrachloride, chloroform, dioxins, ethylene oxide, nickel, trichloroethylene and vinyl chloride.

"There is no amount where we, as staff, can say, 'Under that, it's OK,'" he said.