San Diego County
Air Pollution
Control District

Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Program
Fact Sheet

What's the Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Program?

The California Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Information and Assessment Act (Hot Spots Act), Assembly Bill 2588, was adopted into State Law in 1987 to address public health risks from toxic air contaminants emitted by stationary sources (including manufacturing operations, power plants, and other industrial, commercial and governmental operations that can emit air pollution).

The San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) is responsible for implementing the Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Program (Program) in San Diego County by: (1) evaluating emissions of toxic air contaminants from stationary sources; (2) identifying sources that can create elevated health risks; and, (3) requiring public notification and risk reduction requirements per APCD Rule 1210[1].

What's a toxic air contaminant?

Toxic air contaminants are chemicals that could potentially cause negative health effects if people are exposed to them. The effects can be mild and temporary such as headaches, and eye or throat irritation or can be more serious and permanent such as cancer, birth defects or damage to organs, depending on the amount of time exposed and the type of pollutants.

What's a Health Risk Assessment?

A health risk assessment uses SDAPCD and state approved calculations and guidelines to estimate the possible health risks of developing negative health effects from being exposed to toxic air emissions from a certain source.

State law requires facilities to complete a health risk assessment within 180 days from an SDAPCD request. These health risk assessments then have to be approved by SDAPCD and the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA[2]) within a year.

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[1] https://bit.ly/Rule1210

[2] *OEHHA is the scientific department of the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) that studies the effects of toxics, prepares health risk assessment guidelines, and determines the levels of emissions that can create negative health effects.*

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How accurate is the health risk assessment?

Health risk assessments are based on emission calculations and health protective assumptions to avoid underestimation of the risk to the public. For more info, visit: https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/risk-assessment/document/hrsguide2001.pdf

How are the results of the risk assessment reported to the public?

There are two ways the results are reported: (1) excess lifetime cancer risk and (2) non-cancer hazard index

1. **Excess lifetime cancer risk** is the maximum risk of getting cancer due to constant exposure to pollution from a source. This estimate assumes someone is living at a place which has the highest concentration of the toxic emissions 24 hours per day, 365 days per year with 30 years of exposure, or if someone works at the location which has the highest concentration of toxic emissions 8 hours a day, 250 days a year with 25 years of exposure.
    - **Cancer burden** estimates the possibility of a certain number of cancer cases in an entire population that is exposed to the emissions from a source for their whole life (or about 70 years).

2. The **non-cancer health hazard index** is calculated by dividing the estimated amount of emissions in the air emitted from a source by the amount of emissions that is not expected to cause any negative health effects. No one, including the elderly and children, should be impacted by the emissions from a source if the health hazard index is less than one. If the index is equal to or higher than 1, there is a risk for negative health effects.

For more info about the Hot Spots Program, please visit the SDAPCD website at: **https://bit.ly/SDAPCD-Hot-Spots**