

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0066
(916) 319-2066

DISTRICT OFFICE
3424 WEST CARSON STREET, SUITE 450
TORRANCE, CA 90503
(310) 375-0691
FAX (310) 375-8245



COMMITTEES
ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY AND
TOXIC MATERIALS
NATURAL RESOURCES
UTILITIES AND ENERGY
MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE
SELECT COMMITTEES
CHAIR, AEROSPACE

May 16, 2023

The Honorable President Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I write to you in support of the adoption of a proposal submitted by the Torrance Refinery Action Alliance (TRAA) to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding changes to the agency's Risk Management Program (RMP) regulations and related goals. These proposed changes to RMP rules are aimed at strengthening these rules to better protect the American people against chemical plant explosions that could harm people residing near refineries.

I urge you to direct EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan, to formulate a rule requiring the immediate conversion of the hydrofluoric acid (HF) alkylation process used by HF refineries to one of the multiple commercially proven, vastly safer alternatives that most U.S. refineries use.

As a California Assemblymember serving communities near major oil refineries, I have direct experience with concerns regarding the safety of the refining process near densely populated communities. In 2017, I introduced the "California Refinery Jobs and Safety Action Plan", a package of bills designed to make California refineries safer. But we need to do more. Most of the communities living near HF refineries score high on the EPA environmental justice burden index. Only by requiring these refineries to transition to a safer alternative can my constituents be protected against a potential preventable catastrophe.

Two refineries in my region, located in the communities of Torrance and Wilmington in Los Angeles County, still use HF and modified hydrofluoric acid (MHF) in the refining process. As reported by the Torrance Fire Department, the Torrance Refinery, which uses MHF alkylation process, has experienced more than 20 MHF-related incidents since 2010. MHF, if accidentally leaked, could travel for miles in concentrations sufficient to cause death or irreparable injury to those in its path.

For years, my constituents have voiced strong concerns about the volatility and deadliness of HF. It poses a grave public health risk to my constituents, and it is time to end its use. Already, many refineries around the country use safer alternatives in the petroleum refining process while limiting the risks of chemical explosions to nearby communities.

Also in January 2017, the EPA issued a rule meant to create protections for plant workers and surrounding communities by preventing chemical releases and explosions that could harm to thousands. This rule was a strong start, and the EPA can build upon this reform with stronger measures to stop the use of dangerous chemicals in the refining process.

I believe the EPA should go further and strengthen RMP rules by phasing out the use of HF and MHF in the alkylation process, in order to improve safety at and near petroleum refineries around the nation. The experience of the many residents who have called for safer measures to protect their regions while living near California refineries — and even near your residence at the now demolished Philadelphia refinery — illustrate the need to make these changes.

For these reasons, I strongly support the Torrance Refinery Action Alliance proposal. Please direct the EPA to take urgent action.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your response. Should you have any questions, please contact my District Director, Melissa Ramoso at (310) 375-0691 or Melissa.Ramoso@asm.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Al Muratsuchi".

AL MURATSUCHI
Assemblymember, 66th District