



# South Coast Air Quality Management District

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*Office of the Executive Officer*  
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February 25, 2022

Honorable Cristina Garcia  
Assemblymember, 58th District  
8255 Firestone Blvd., Suite 203  
Downey, CA 90241

Re: Rendering Plant Odor Affecting Southeast Los Angeles Communities

Dear Assemblymember Garcia,

Thank you for your follow-up letter to the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) Governing Board, dated February 4, 2022, regarding the rendering plants located in and near the City of Vernon and those facilities' impacts on residents of Southeast Los Angeles. I have been asked by Governing Board Chair Ben Benoit to respond to your letter on his behalf.

On February 4, 2022, I sent a written response to the letter we received from SELA United (of which you were a part) providing our community partners an update on South Coast AQMD's ongoing investigation of the rendering plants, the status of implementation of this agency's Rule 415, upcoming deadlines for the installation of enclosures for rendering operations, and our current enforcement processes. A copy of my response to SELA United is enclosed for your ease of reference. I address each of the three points raised in your February 4th letter, as follows:

First, you asked that South Coast AQMD make it easy for the public to report and confirm violations of Rule 415 – *Odors from Rendering Facilities*. As a preliminary matter, members of the public do not need to report or confirm violations of Rule 415. Rule 415 was adopted to provide an additional level of protection for affected communities, even if no public nuisance could be established. Rule 415 prescribes Best Management Practices (BMPs), the installation of enclosures, and focuses on the rendering plants' on-site processes and equipment. On January 20, 2022, our agency issued an NOV to Baker Commodities Inc. for failing to process or enclose raw materials within four hours, in violation of Rule 415(e)(5), for which we published a [press release](#). Establishing public nuisance violations, which are governed by our Rule 402 and Section 41700 of the California Health & Safety Code, requires that our

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inspectors verify odors generally with at least six complainants and then trace the odors back to a source. Establishing a public nuisance during an odor event is another tool for us to issue a Notice of Violation (NOV), as we have done with the Dominguez Channel Odor Incident, Mutual Flavors in City Terrace, and many others.

Second, you requested that the bar be lowered for South Coast AQMD staff to issue violations of Rule 415. Enforcement thresholds for Rule 415 are based on meeting compliance requirements specified in the rule, not the number of complaints we receive. Odor complaints, however, can lead us to identify potential sources and inspection of facilities, and ideally to stop the emanating odors. Complaints can also establish a public nuisance and serve as another means to get facilities in compliance.

Third, you asked that we establish clear rules and specific consequences for violations of Rule 415. South Coast AQMD rules do not normally include express penalty provisions; instead, the penalties for air quality violations are set forth in the California Health & Safety Code. A major concern for air districts is that strict liability penalty authority is generally limited to \$10,000 per day per violation. While significant to a small, family-run company, that sum has very little deterrent value to the prototypical large, well-funded corporate violator. I've asked my staff to evaluate potential legislative options that could be requested to help address the current statutory limitations. Once we have a proposal for legislation, I look forward to speaking with you about it and continuing to work together to protect the communities we serve.

South Coast AQMD staff will continue to conduct facility inspections and field operations, respond to all public complaints, engage in outreach to schools and local officials, and work with other government agencies to address rendering odors. Please feel free to contact me directly if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,



Wayne Natri  
Executive Officer

WN/TM:drw

Enclosure

cc: South Coast AQMD Governing Board