AQMD SETTLES VIOLATIONS WITH EXXONMOBIL FOR $8.25 MILLION

Sept. 2, 2004

In one of the region’s largest air pollution penalties, ExxonMobil Oil Corp. paid $8.25 million this week to the South Coast Air Quality Management District to settle numerous air quality violations at the company’s Torrance refinery and Terminal Island facility.

“ExxonMobil has cooperated with AQMD in its investigation of these violations and has addressed the problems we found,” said Barry Wallerstein, AQMD’s executive officer. “Nevertheless, these are significant and numerous violations that merit a substantial penalty.”

The penalty settlement, the third largest in AQMD’s history, is for dozens of violations of AQMD’s rules and regulations at ExxonMobil’s refinery at 3700 West 190th St. in Torrance and terminal at 551 Pilchard St. on Terminal Island between January 2001 and May 2004.

Most of the ExxonMobil violations were for improper inspection and maintenance of large, above-ground tanks used to store gasoline and other petroleum-based liquids; and for leaks of smog-forming volatile organic compounds from those tanks and other equipment.

AQMD and ExxonMobil agreed on terms of the settlement earlier this summer. AQMD received the full penalty payment from ExxonMobil on Sept. 1.

The first and second largest penalty settlements with AQMD respectively were with AES Alamitos LLC, for $17 million in December 2000; and with Los Angeles Department of Power and Water, for $14 million also in 2000. Both of those settlements were for excess power plant emissions during the state’s energy crisis.

The AQMD continues to seek more than $400 million in penalties against BP West Coast Products LLC in a Superior Court case. A portion of the penalties sought in the case relate to the company’s failure to inspect and maintain large above-ground storage tanks at its Carson refinery. The BP case, however, involves far more numerous and serious allegations including intentional conduct and the falsification of documents.

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

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