

Bay Area Air board hits the road to see business pollution up close

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The Bay Area's air pollution board will soon hit the road, holding some of its meetings at businesses it regulates to give members more insight into the board's job of protecting clean air.

Starting with a public meeting at 9:45 a.m. Wednesday at the Port of Oakland, the board intends to hold several meetings this year at or near a power plant, oil refinery, dry cleaner, gas station, and Silicon Valley high tech industry.

"Seeing these industries firsthand should make us more effective in our job at regulating air pollution," said John Gioia, the Contra Costa County supervisor recently elected chairman of the 22-member air board. "It's just not the same thing as getting a briefing in our headquarters building in San Francisco."

Gioia said he expects about six special meetings to be held at industries yet to be determined.

The nine-county Bay Area Air Quality Management District regulates more than 10,000 permitted sources of stationary pollution in sites ranging from big oil refineries to diesel generators at office buildings.

The district also has some authority over industries that attract large volumes of truck, train and ship traffic, like the Port of Oakland.

Last year, the board began getting regular in-depth briefings on pollution topics, but Gioia said it was difficult to get board members "engaged" in the technical discussions without real life businesses and equipment to look at.

The planned tours and meetings will give industries a chance to explain their pollution-control efforts, and the public a chance to observe and comment, air district officials said.

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AIR BOARD HITS THE ROAD

- What: First of Bay Area air pollution board meetings to be held at sites of businesses and industries that are regulated pollution sources.

- Who: Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board
- When: 9:45 a.m. Wednesday
- Where: Port of Oakland board room, 530 Water St., Oakland. Boat tour of port facilities to follow.

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