

# Richmond Confidential

## Chevron installs new air monitor in North Richmond

By Mark Andrew Boyer

Posted September 27, 2013 5:09 pm



Contra Costa County residents will soon have a better understanding of exactly what is in the air they're breathing. Chevron recently installed a new air-monitoring station at Fire Station 62, in North Richmond, which will provide real-time data about what chemicals are in the air.

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The oil company is nearly finished installing six new air monitoring stations – three along the fence line of the refinery and three in residential neighborhoods. Chevron completed the fence line stations in April, and they are currently transmitting data. Workers recently installed the first of the neighborhood stations, in North Richmond, and it will begin sharing data within two weeks.

“It’s being calibrated to ensure that it’s accurate,” says Chevron spokesman Jason Barnett. “We want to make sure that when data is shared with the community that we can rely on the equipment, that it’s been operating for a reasonable period of time, and that the results are sound.”

All of the stations will be run by Argos Scientific Inc., an independent contractor that has experience operating similar air-monitoring systems at other refineries in the region.

Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, who serves as a member of the California Air Resources Board, said it’s good that Chevron is sharing more data with the public. But he said the Bay Area Air Quality Management District won’t be able to impose fines and penalties based on the data they transmit, because a third part is installing and operating the monitors.

“The bottom line is, you want monitors that are reviewed by an independent public agency,” Gioia says.

The air district is currently developing a new rule that will require enhanced air quality monitoring around the Bay Area’s five major oil refineries. But Gioia says he is unsure whether Chevron’s new air monitors will meet the new requirements.

Chevron agreed to install the new air monitors in 2010 after Richmond officials withdrew a ballot measure to increase taxes on the refinery’s utility usage. Barnett says the three-year delay was mostly due to logistics. But Gioia suggests that the August 2012 refinery fire, which sent 15,000 Richmond residents to area hospitals, prompted both Chevron and city officials to speed up the process.

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The new air monitors are a step in the right direction, says Gioia, but that it isn't enough to simply publish the data. "When you have monitoring information, you want to make the information meaningful to the public, and not just be data," he says. "It's good to have continuous data you can put on the web, but I think what should go along with that is the ability to have an interpretation by a health professional of what that means."

Data from the fence line monitors is currently being shared on the website [www.fenceline.org/Richmond](http://www.fenceline.org/Richmond). Chevron hopes to have the other two stations, which will be located in Point Richmond and Atchison Village, up and running by the end of the year.

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