

# Move forward with ISO

DECEMBER 8, 2017 *By Constance Beutel* <http://beniciaheraldonline.com/letter-move-forward-with-iso/>

Benicia suffered a major toxic incident when Valero emitted thousands of pounds of dangerous chemicals last May. On a continuing basis, Benicia's Valero refinery is fined by Bay Area and State agencies for emissions exceeding toxic limits.

Currently, access to the refinery emissions data as well as the actions taken to fix unsafe and/or unhealthy conditions is hard to access and often not published for many months. Citizens and community groups find emission and incident reports complicated and difficult to obtain. It is time to change that – for the safety of everyone in Benicia. The city of Benicia needs to have its own Industrial Safety Ordinance for the protection of residents, visitors and those who work in our town.

The ordinance would mandate that city officials, especially fire and police, be notified when dangerous conditions happen. Shockingly, that is not the standard operating procedure right now. Further, findings of the incident report would be sent to city officials. The costs associated with administration and oversight of an Industrial Safety Ordinance would be paid by the refinery and not taxpayer dollars. Finally, Benicia could impose and collect fines from the refinery when incidents deemed to harm our community are noted.

Yes, there is a state of California Industrial Safety Ordinance. However, the focus is work safety at a statewide level. Benicia needs a local ordinance to ensure timely communications with our community when near catastrophic events happen, such as the flaring incident on May 5. We deserve immediate attention that currently can take years or months. When health and safety are at stake, timeliness is essential. Valero has said it is proud of its safety record. Our local refinery should welcome additional and local verification of its safety in the very community in which it is located. I urge our elected city officials to move quickly to enact an Industrial Safety Ordinance so Benicia isn't the only city in the North Bay refinery corridor that isn't protected by one of its own.

*Constance Beutel,  
Benicia*