

Madeline Cortez

Good evening, my name is Madeline Cortez and I am a resident of Tulare County, but I'm sharing a comment from a Kern County resident from the community of Fuller Acres named Jenni.

The Kern Energy refinery processes 27,000 barrels of crude oil per day across the street from my small, unincorporated community of Fuller Acres southeast of Bakersfield. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District gave the public notice of its intent to approve Kern Energy's permit to set up a new hydrogen power generation operation. The plan was not presented to the local community steering committee, even though the area is part of California's AB 617 program. Residents living just feet from the fence line were neither consulted nor informed in advance. Fence-line air monitoring shows daily exposures to benzene, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, and nitrogen dioxide — chemicals linked to cancer, respiratory illness, and death. Flares and noxious odors frequently trigger emergency responses. Since 1995, the refinery has been under a state clean-up and abatement order for its significant spills and leaks. From 2018 to 2023 alone, it accumulated extensive air quality violations. The damage is cumulative. Fuller Acres' drinking water contains high levels of TCP-1,2,3 and arsenic from historic industrial pollution. Regulators recently found PFAS, "forever chemicals," in the groundwater. While Kern Energy has paid fines, residents see no direct cleanup or benefits. Fuller Acres is treated as a sacrifice zone, where toxic exposure is normalized by industry and elected leaders. The cap and invest program provides continued free allowances for refineries like this one to keep polluting. I urge you to reject the 15-day changes and remove the MDI which would continue to make Fuller Acres a sacrifice zone.