

March 7, 2023

### HEALTH ADVISORY

Until communitywide soil testing is completed, Contra Costa Health (CCH) recommends that no one consume fruits or vegetables grown in soil exposed to substances released on November 24 and 25, 2022, in communities surrounding the Martinez Refining Company (MRC), 3485 Pacheco Boulevard.

This recommendation extends to properties where a powder-like substance described by MRC as “spent catalyst” was released into the air and accumulated at ground level during a fluid catalytic cracker spent-catalyst release on the above dates. The incident was determined to be a Major Chemical Accident or Release (MCAR) by the CCH Hazardous Materials Program (Incident #22112601).

CCH makes this recommendation out of an abundance of caution. At this time, CCH has no evidence that there is or is not a soilborne health risk associated with this incident.

The recommendation does not extend to growing fruits and vegetables on affected properties. The recommendation not to consume produce from these properties will be lifted if the assessment determines there is no increased risk to health as a result of the spent-catalyst release.

This recommendation does not extend to gardening in containers or raised beds if at least 12” of clean/new soil from elsewhere is used.

Individual testing of spent catalyst samples collected after the incident detected unusually high levels of metals in the spent catalyst, including aluminum, barium, chromium, nickel, vanadium, and zinc. There is potential risk of health concerns from regularly eating produce grown in soil contaminated with high levels of these metals over a long period of time (months or years).

CCH is facilitating an independent, community-involved assessment to determine if soil contamination related to the incident poses health concerns. Investigation findings may not be available until summer of 2023, later than when many residents traditionally plant home gardens.

The regulatory investigation of this incident has been referred to the Contra Costa District Attorney’s Office.

Visit [cchealth.org/hazmat](https://cchealth.org/hazmat) for updates and more information about the community investigation, including dates and times for public meetings conducted online.

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