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August 12, 2026

Lee Zeldin
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Scott Mason
Regional Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 6
1201 Elm Street, Suite 500
Dallas, Texas 75270

Dear Administrator Zeldin and Regional Administrator Mason:

I write to express serious concern regarding the significant air emissions event at Marathon Petroleum's El Paso Refinery on August 4–5, 2026¹ and the refinery's compliance with its air permit and its communication with surrounding communities and local officials.

According to reports^{2,3} filed with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), a process upset involving the refinery's fluid catalytic cracker resulted in the release of approximately 8,897.9 pounds of propylene, 862 pounds of sulfur dioxide, and 19.1 pounds of 1,3-butadiene, all exceeding permitted allowances. The reported sulfur dioxide emissions alone were 3,591 times the permitted limit.

During the incident, residents were not notified of the source of emissions and reported strong petroleum-like odors, illness, lightheadedness, and having to leave their homes. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that exposure to sulfur dioxide can affect both health and the environment⁴ and the National Cancer Institute has shown 1,3-butadiene is a human carcinogen⁵.

Equally concerning, local community leaders, including County Commissioner David Stout were not directly notified by Marathon when the incident began. He reportedly received information

¹ [KTSM – El Paso News - Stout demands accountability after emissions report in South-Central El Paso refinery 'incident'](#)

² [TCEQ Air Emission Event Report Database Incident 463231](#)

³ [TCEQ Air Emission Event Report Database Incident 463229](#)

⁴ [EPA Sulfur Dioxide Basics](#)

⁵ [NCI – 1,3-Butadiene](#)

only after contacting the refinery himself and was subsequently assured that air monitoring had detected no health risks and that the situation had been resolved¹. In a similar response, City Council Representative Josh Acevedo is calling on Marathon representatives to appear before the El Paso City Council to explain the situation⁶.

This apparent disconnect raises serious questions about Marathon's compliance with federal requirements, its notification obligations, and the adequacy of its response to hazardous emissions.

There is also a broader history of federal Clean Air Act enforcement involving Marathon and petroleum-refining operations. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has previously taken enforcement action involving Marathon facilities for alleged Clean Air Act violations, including violations involving refinery flaring and excess emissions⁷.

I therefore strongly urge the EPA to launch an investigation into the incident and provide answers to the following:

- Did Marathon violate any federal requirements, including the Clean Air Act or its Title V permit?
- When did Marathon notify EPA and TCEQ, and what information did it provide?
- Did Marathon follow its risk management plan triggered by the release of 1,3-Butadiene?
- Why did Marathon not notify local officials or the public? What corrective actions are being taken by the EPA, TCEQ, or Marathon Petroleum to ensure that local communities receive timely and transparent communication following incidents of unexpected emissions?
- What air monitoring was conducted during and after the incident, what pollutants were monitored, and what were the results?
- Has EPA independently evaluated the potential health impacts of the reported releases, particularly sulfur dioxide and 1,3-butadiene?
- What additional monitoring, investigation, or enforcement action does EPA believe is warranted?

Residents of El Paso deserve timely and accurate information when hazardous pollutants are released into their community. EPA and Region 6 must ensure that Marathon is held accountable for any violations and that appropriate measures are taken to prevent a similar incident from occurring again.

Please provide a written response addressing these questions and copies of relevant inspection reports, notices of violation, monitoring data, correspondence, and other records related to the

⁶ [KFOX14 – El Paso leaders demand Marathon refinery answers](#)

⁷ [Marathon Petroleum Company - LP and Catlettsburg Refining - LLC Settlement \(Flaring\)](#)

August 4–5 incident by August 31, 2026. I also request that my office be kept informed of any investigation or enforcement action concerning Marathon’s El Paso Refinery.

I continue to support the contested case hearing scheduled for this fall to review Marathon’s air permit⁸, building on the public comments I submitted in 2021 regarding renewal of the refinery’s TCEQ permit and calling for greater accountability and protection of public health. I look forward to your prompt response and to working with EPA and Region 6 to protect the health and safety of El Paso residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica Escobar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

⁸ [KFOX14 – Legal Hearing for Marathon](#)