



Your frequently asked questions

Does the Fawley site produce toxic chemicals?

We produce fuels and chemicals used in modern day life. However, we do work with large quantities of hazardous materials every day, so we understand the dangers involved and take the necessary measure to prevent incidents.

What is the white “smoke” I see coming from the site?

It is not smoke, but steam. Steam is used to power our operation and you may see excess steam from time-to-time.

The flames, sometimes visible from the top of your towers are alarming. What are they?

A visible flame might look alarming, but is in fact an important part of our operation. The only flames you will see are from one or more of the flare stacks rather than from the main process towers. The flare is a normal and vital part of keeping the plant running safely during unplanned operational interruptions, or scheduled maintenance. It is a safe, controlled and environmentally permitted way of burning off excess gas which would normally be recycled and used in our operating processes.

If you would like more information on flaring, please visit:

Fawley flares explained (THIS WILL LINK WHEN LIVE) or fawleyonline.org.uk/a-flare-for-safety

What is the Black Smoke?

Black smoke from the flare may occur sometimes as a result of an operational upset where insufficient steam is being sent to the flare to ensure clean burning of the hydrocarbons. The smoke is caused by the presence of partially burned material. As with the burning of any hydrocarbon materials they will produce a range of complex products, similar to that of smoke from a bonfire. The elevated flaring is designed to allow dispersion and dilution of the smoke.

How will I get up-to-date information about Fawley’s operation?

We post operational updates to the “Community update” section of this website or fawleyonline.org.uk as necessary when we think that an operational activity may affect our surrounding community. You will also find general and COMAH information about the ExxonMobil Fawley operation under the “Emergency response” section of this website or fawleyonline.org.uk. However, please contact us 24/7 on 023 8089 2511 if you are at all concerned.

Are the Flares safe?

Yes. Flaring is a safe, controlled and environmentally permitted way of burning off excess gas which would normally be recycled and used in our operating processes. If you would like more information on flaring, please visit: Fawley flares explained (THIS WILL LINK WHEN LIVE) or fawleyonline.org.uk/a-flare-for-safety

What are the smells coming from the site?

We sometimes get the community approaching us about a smell that has been picked up in the surrounding area. We will always investigate to see if it is a result of our operation as some of our processes could produce odours. If you are at all concerned, we encourage you to call us on 023 8089 2511.



Your frequently asked questions *(continued)*

Are the emissions from the site impacting air quality?

Emissions are carefully controlled, monitored and reported to remain within the permitted levels. In 2013, the Air Quality Management Areas in the vicinity of the Fawley site was considered no longer necessary and revoked by the New Forest District Council following significant reductions in SO₂ emissions.

Do emissions from the site cause cancer?

Emissions from the Fawley site are strictly controlled and regulated via our environmental permits. Refer to answer above.

You appear to flare more frequently, why is this?

The flares are used when there is an interruption to operations or, a unit is being shutdown/started up. See the "Community update" section of this website or fawleyonline.org.uk for operational updates.

Is the Fawley site properly maintained?

Yes. As with all machinery from aircraft to cars, our units require maintenance throughout their life, from servicing to repairs through to upgrades in order to operate safely and reliably. Every year at least £50M is spent on routine maintenance.

Is the site now beyond its intended operational age limit?

No. Fawley is regularly maintained and upgraded. We expect Fawley to continue to operate for many years to come.

Is the Fawley site safe?

Yes. Safety is at the heart of everything we do. Since operations began, 70 years' ago, we are proud to say that we have never had an incident which posed a threat to the local community; our intention is to maintain this record. We are also one of the most regulated industries anywhere in the world. We would simply not be allowed to operate if we did not do it safely.

The Fawley site is a COMAH site. What does this mean?

Fawley is a COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards) designated facility. Therefore, it is a strictly regulated facility where the highest of safety standards are expected. The HSE and the EA as Fawley's Regulator, monitor the Fawley operation.

Does Fawley have a future in the Waterside?

Most definitely. We are proud to be in the Waterside. A refinery has been on this site for 100 years and the Esso refinery, has been located here since 1951. Critical to national infrastructure, Fawley manufactures a wide range of products including approximately one fifth of the UK's transportation fuel needs. The majority of its products including petrol, diesel and jet fuel are sent direct to fuel terminals via pipelines across the South of England.

Esso Petroleum Company, Limited at Fawley has adapted and today its sister company, ExxonMobil Chemical Ltd, produces a wide range of lubricants and chemicals which are essential in modern-day society. Products produced go into items as diverse as medical equipment such as masks and respirators, your mobile phone and packaging. Even the rubber produced helps keep modern day tyres inflated for longer.