

Chiquita Canyon Landfill Odors and Health Concerns

FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

Since early 2022, the **Chiquita Canyon Landfill (CCL)** has been experiencing a subsurface reaction in an inactive or no longer used area of the landfill. The reaction is producing increased landfill gases and leachate (water that drains through and picks up dissolved substances from the waste). At times, the combination of increased leachate and landfill gases has reduced the effectiveness of the landfill's gas collection and control system, resulting in increased and repeated unpleasant odors and odor complaints.

Nearby community members have reported thousands of odor complaints, along with health complaints such as headaches, dizziness, irritation of eyes, nose or throat, coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and sleep problems. In addition, ongoing exposures to these unpleasant odors from landfill gases may cause mental stress, including feelings of anxiety, helplessness, discouragement, sadness, or depression.

In response, multiple local, state, and federal agencies continue directing the owners and operators of Chiquita Canyon Landfill to monitor, control, and mitigate the landfill gases and unpleasant odors from the reaction area.



During the summer of 2025, the community received multiple alerts about elevated air levels (above the acute Reference Exposure Level, or REL as established by the California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment) of hydrogen sulfide (characterized by rotten egg odor) or benzene (odorless) gases near the landfill. Follow-up testing and monitoring showed the air levels remained below health-based safety limits for those air pollutants. The alerts were triggered by temporary sensor or process issues at the landfill and were not due to an ongoing hazard.

Why am I experiencing health problems since the reaction started?

The subsurface reaction at the landfill, hydrogen sulfide (H_2S) levels in the air have generally been below the acute health-based limit or REL, which is 30 parts per billion (ppb). However, the H_2S air levels have repeatedly been **above** the odor threshold, which is 0.5 ppb, resulting in thousands of public complaints to the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and many notices of violations issued by SCAQMD to CCL. The SCAQMD investigates, monitors, and enforces air quality rules to mitigate odor sources.

The difference between the odor threshold and acute limits is important to understand. Even at air levels below the acute REL for H_2S , many community members can smell and react to the odor. This helps explain the symptoms people have experienced and reported, and which are most likely caused by ongoing exposure to hydrogen sulfide at levels above the odor threshold but below the acute REL.

Hydrogen sulfide can have a strong, rotten-egg smell, that is detectable at extremely low levels, long before it reaches the acute REL that monitoring systems pick up. Repeated exposure, even at these low levels, can cause irritation and discomfort when present.

Common symptoms include:



Sensory irritation
burning or discomfort
in eyes, nose, or throat



Neurologic symptoms
headaches, dizziness,
fatigue, trouble
concentrating

While hydrogen sulfide may not reach levels that are immediately dangerous, repeated nuisance-level exposure (enough to cause odors and irritation) can still affect quality of life and health. People experiencing these odors have reported headaches, shakiness, fatigue, and sleep disturbances, which may result from a combination of low-level H_2S air exposure, ongoing irritation, stress, and disrupted sleep. These factors can interact to amplify the health impact of the odors.

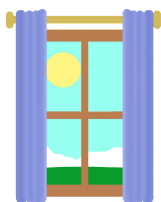
Since the start of this reaction, ongoing odors have continued to affect the community. Many people report feeling anxious, fearful, or emotionally drained when these odors repeatedly enter their homes or interfere with daily activities. These reactions reflect real impacts on both mental and physical well-being and are an expected part of their experience of this reaction.

How can I reduce exposure to the odors?

When odors are present, you can take steps to reduce exposure and odors indoors by:



Limiting outdoor activities



Keeping windows and doors closed



Use air filters or air conditioning, if available

i If you have specific health concerns, speak with a health care provider.

How can I stay informed about air quality levels near CCL?

Below are several steps you can take to receive information about air quality levels around CCL.

1. Sign up for text alerts when air levels are above the acute REL at:

chiquitacanyon.com/subscribe-alerts/

2. View real-time air monitoring levels from both on-site and off-site monitoring stations for CCL at:

chiquitacanyon.com/reports/community-air-monitoring-program/.

This site contains one-hour average data, as well as the average wind speed and direction for the same time period, for community air monitoring stations.

- To view benzene and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs) air monitoring levels, visit chiquitacanyon.com/reports/community-air-monitoring-program/ and select On-site or Off-site monitoring stations (On-site MS 01-05 or Off-site MS 06-12), then the specific monitoring station (e.g. MS 03, MS 07, etc.) you want to view. You can then navigate the page to view data for a variety of chemicals and locations.

Who can I contact with questions about air quality?



Reporting Odors or Health Concerns

- **Odors:** To report an odor complaint, contact the **South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)** at (800) 288-7664 or use their Online Complaint System: bit.ly/New_Complaint.
- **Health Concerns:** To report a health concern, contact the LA County Department of Public Health at (626) 430-9821 or email tox@ph.lacounty.gov.



Understanding Environmental Odors

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Fact Sheet: bit.ly/CDC_FactSheet
- CDCTox Fact Sheet on Benzene: bit.ly/Tox_FactSheet_Benzene
- CDCTox Fact Sheet on Hydrogen Sulfide: bit.ly/Tox_FactSheet_HS



State and Federal Agency Roles

- **California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA):**
CalEPA is the umbrella agency enforcement charged with ensuring compliance activities related to CCL are consistent and coordinated, including through its participation in the multi-agency critical action team. Please visit: calepa.ca.gov/chiquita-canyon-response/
- **California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC):**
DTSC regulates facilities that handle hazardous waste, ensures they follow environmental laws, conducts inspections, and oversees cleanup if contamination is found. Please visit: dtsc.ca.gov/chiquita-landfill/
- **California Water Board:**
Through the Los Angeles Regional Water Board, this agency oversees CCL's compliance with waste discharge requirements to protect water quality from disposal of solid wastes to land, including provisions for leachate and landfill-gas condensate containment and groundwater monitoring and reviews pollution prevention plans and monitoring reports, conducts inspections to determine compliance with permit provisions, and takes enforcement action for violations of permit provisions as necessary. Please visit: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwqcb4/board_decisions/tentative_orders/individual/non-%20npdes/Chiquita_Canyon/

Who can I contact with questions about air quality? (CONTINUED)



US Environmental Protection Agency: The US EPA is responsible for the enforcement of federal environmental protection laws and partners with CalEPA and other State and local agencies to ensure CCL's compliance. Please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/ca/chiquita-canyon-landfill>



Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Solid Waste Permitting and Surveillance Program: This program is certified by the California Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) to act as a **Local Enforcement Agency (LEA)** for CCL. The LEA enforces state and local regulations related to solid waste sites. To report a problem or complaint, go to <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/business/landfills.htm>.

Local Enforcement Agency (LEA): www.calrecycle.ca.gov/lea