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# Castaic landfill needs to make 15 fixes to stop noxious odors, state report says

CalRecycle's report also confirms the problem stems from a smoldering hot spot deep in the bowels of an older section of the Castaic-area landfill

Chiquita Canyon Landfill in Castaic on Wednesday, October 18, 2023. (Photo by Dean Musgrove, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

By STEVE SCAUZILLO | sscauzillo@scng.com | Daily News
PUBLISHED: October 18, 2023 at 4:43 p.m. | UPDATED: October 19, 2023 at 1:14 p.m.

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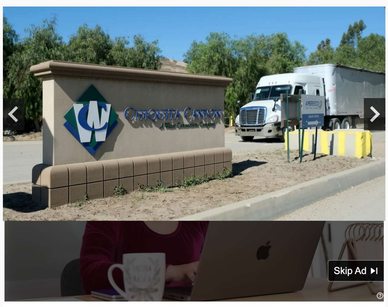
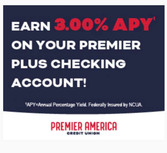



Landfill Manager Steve Cassulo did not respond to a message left on his phone by deadline on Wednesday.

Strong landfill odors are affecting residents from Val Verde, Castaic, Live Oak and Hasley Canyon — areas near the 639-acre landfill in the Santa Clarita Valley privately owned and operated by Chiquita Canyon, LLC.

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Many residents testified before the South Coast Air Quality Management District Hearing Board on Sept. 6, complaining of nausea, vomiting, nose bleeds and asthma attacks. Residents said they can't go outside because of the odors and must stay indoors with their windows shut and air conditioning running 24/7.

Laurance Israel, supervising air quality inspector with the AQMD, testified at the hearing that there have been 2,100 complaints roughly from May 1 to Sept. 6, and that reports of health problems were increasing. The SCAQMD imposed an order with 40 conditions for improving the landfill.

On Wednesday, Dr. Nichole Quick, director of the health protection bureau of the county's Department of Public Health (DPH), said these kinds of acute symptoms are consistent with exposure to landfill gases. However, levels of VOCs in the air or in the liquid known as leachate coming off the landfill are not yet known.

The county DPH is in the process of conducting a comprehensive health assessment that will look at exposure to particulates, sulfur compounds, and VOCs. "We do not have all the information at this time," Quick said. The county is using an independent consultant to collect samples of potential pollutants being emitted by the landfill. That report should be available by early next year, she said.

Experts at the press briefing were asked if extreme weather due to climate change had any effect on the landfill's emission of odorous gases.

"This year, we had an above average rainfall year," began Mark Pestrella, director of Public Works. "Landfills across the state have seen an increase in odor incidents."

At the September hearing, representatives of the landfill said they have already begun installing new extraction wells to help remove gases that produce odors. Permission for what will be a third flare on the landfill to be used to burn off gases was granted by the South Coast Air Quality Management District on Sept. 28.

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