



April 15, 2025

Kathryn Barger, Board President
Fifth District Supervisor

Hilda L. Solis
First District Supervisor

Holly J. Mitchell
Second District Supervisor

Janice Hahn
Fourth District Supervisor

Lindsey P. Horvath
Third District Supervisor

Dear Members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors:

The following Members of the Los Angeles County Legislative Delegation are writing to elevate the worsening conditions at Chiquita Canyon Landfill (CCL) and to urge the Board of Supervisors to direct the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) to take additional action to protect the health and safety of residents impacted.

Recent findings by the California Environmental Protection Agency found the reaction area has tripled in size from approximately 30 to 90 acres of burning trash and now is expected to burn for multiple decades. This massive expansion has led to additional enforcement action due to the increased risk posed by the growing disaster, including the Department of Toxic Substances Control issuing an “Imminent and Substantial Endangerment Order.” CalEPA also stated this is an “urgent environmental and public health crisis”. Assembly, Senate and Congressional representatives have been told by the County Health Officer that despite this massive expansion, additional action beyond monitoring air quality and logging community health symptoms will not be taken. This is unacceptable and a departure from past actions of the Department. For example, in the 2016 final report of a Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) study, which was initiated in response to the Aliso Canyon disaster, LACDPH stated:

“Throughout the leak, methane levels in the community were elevated, but below those presenting a risk to health and safety. Measured benzene levels in the community fluctuated somewhat, with a maximum short-term reading of 5.6 parts per billion (ppb); however, average outdoor air levels were consistently less than 1 ppb, established by the Office of Environmental and Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) as the outdoor air threshold for long-term exposure in the state of California. Sulfur odorants, which are added to natural gas, were consistently below the instrument detection limits of field instruments but were presumed to be the cause of symptoms experienced by some residents in the community due to their low odor threshold. Symptoms of odorant exposure include nausea, abdominal discomfort, headaches, dizziness, light-headedness, eye discomfort and other mucous membrane irritation, and shortness of breath.”

There are similar circumstances around Chiquita Canyon Landfill, with numerous toxic air contaminants such as hydrogen sulfide, methane, and carcinogens such as benzene, acrolein, and more present. Air monitoring in the Val Verde community has shown benzene reaching above 6.12 ppb, nearing the 8 ppb recommended exposure limit for 8 hours, and the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) found exceedances of hydrogen sulfide above the one hour standard of 30 ppb. Remember, residents have been exposed 24 hours a day for three years with multiple decades to come - not one or eight hours.

However, in Aliso Canyon, despite air monitors being consistently below detection limits for various chemicals, LACDPH responded with the following actions:

“On November 19, 2015, DPH issued a directive to SCG to provide temporary relocation assistance to any resident affected by odors from the Aliso Canyon site. The purpose of this directive was to provide area residents with a mode of relief from odors and symptoms experienced in their homes...DPH also enlisted volunteers within the community to report on the continued presence of odors in the outdoor environment... DPH collaborated with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to develop a Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) to further investigate the nature of the health complaints within the communities closest to the Aliso Canyon facility... On March 10-12, 2016, DPH conducted a CASPER in order to address the following objectives: 1) to assess the frequency and types of reported health symptoms from residents during the active gas leak and after the leaking well was sealed, 2) to determine the scope of reported odors and the appearance of oily residues on surfaces in the community, and 3) to develop recommendations to guide public health response.”

As a note, the order for SoCal Gas to provide temporary relocation assistance occurred 27 days after the discovery of the leak, before any lawsuit had been filed by either LA City or LA County, and this was coupled with an additional order directing SoCal Gas to assist LAUSD to relocate affected students to alternate school facilities. It is evident from the Department’s response to past incidents involving community poisoning with nearly identical gasses of concern (benzene, methane, sulfide compounds) that more action can and must be taken for the residents of Val Verde, Castaic, and Santa Clarita. The levels of gasses in both disasters do not accurately reflect the pain and suffering being felt by the community, and it is incumbent on us to let the magnitude of symptoms being experienced guide the health and safety response, as was the case in Aliso Canyon. It is important to note that the symptoms being experienced by those living near the Chiquita Canyon Landfill have gone on for longer (by years), and in many cases are much more severe, than those experienced by the community living near Aliso Canyon.

In the 2016 CASPER study on Aliso Canyon, it was noted that between Oct 28, 2015 and February 18, 2016, 700 complaints of symptoms associated with the odors were received by LACDPH. In a similar timeframe, between May 17, 2023 and Aug 15, 2023, the SCAQMD received over 1,200 odor complaints – almost double that of the Aliso complaints. In all of 2023, SCAQMD received 6,840 complaints, 19,788 in 2024, there have been 1,735 in 2025 already,

meaning a total of 28,341 complaints since April 2023. As a note, the November 19, 2015 order from LACDPH requiring SoCal Gas pay for relocation of individuals, students, and faculty occurred when there were just over 200 odor complaints. There are now over 20,000% more complaints submitted to SCAQMD in response to Chiquita Canyon than were present when LACDPH required SoCalGas to fund relocation.

Turning to the evaluation of health impacts, the CASPER studied a predetermined area of interest that approximates the entire population from which a CASPER sample is drawn in order to generalize the results. The sampling frame for the CASPER encompassed the communities closest to the Aliso Canyon facility, which reported the most frequent number of health complaints to LACDPH. This covered a 3-mile radius south of the gas release. A sample of 210 households were interviewed from a total of 7,755 housing units to provide an estimate of impact to the broader community. The current LACDPH’s health survey of those closest to the Chiquita Canyon Landfill, initiated in October 2024, relies on self-reporting from community members.

As of April 2, there have been over 1178 respondents with 502 indicating that they smell odor every day. And not only do the chemicals that have an odor, such as hydrogen sulfide, benzene, and acrolein, have painful side effects of their own, but there is a cocktail of toxic chemicals that are odorless, such as methane, with significant impacts. Additionally, we know that toxic chemicals and extreme symptoms are also present in the absence of landfill odors or smell. While there are slight differences in specific symptoms that the data was aggregated between the two studies, below is a side-by-side comparison of symptoms for respondents for the CASPER study who smelled odors after the leak was sealed and for those who reported a smell at the time of reporting to the Chiquita Canyon Survey.

2016 Aliso CASPER Study		Chiquita Canyon Survey	
	Smelled Odors (85)		Reported Smell (701)
Headache	71 %	Headache	77 %
Eye/nose irritation	75 %	Eye/nose irritation	72 %
Nosebleeds	47 %	Runny/bloody nose	
Stress	55 %	Stress, difficulty sleeping	53 %
Light Headed, dizzy	58 %	Light-headed, dizzy	52 %
Difficulty breathing, coughing	68 %	Difficulty breathing, coughing	49 %
Chest tightness		Chest tightness, palpitations	31 %
Nausea/vomiting	52 %	Nausea, vomiting	44 %
Diarrhea	35 %	Diarrhea	
Irritated skin, rash	50 %	Irritated skin, rash	25 %
Fever	16 %		
		Other	15 %
		Tremors	12 %

It is clear, similar to Aliso, the vast majority of those reporting smells are experiencing medical impacts when the odor is present, just as they were during the Aliso Canyon leak. That being the case, and what we know of the response and action taken for those in the community near Aliso Canyon, the undersigned request that the Board of Supervisors direct the following actions from

LACDPH:

1. Provide notices to all healthcare providers, hospitals and clinics within north LA County alerting them to the incident at Chiquita Canyon, chemicals identified in the community, possible health impacts of those chemicals, symptoms of exposure to those chemicals, and websites or resources where additional information from LACDPH can be found.
2. Update the LACDPH website with prominently placed information where residents can find information about the disaster and pertinent information about the chemicals being released, possible side effects, and instruction on how to report side effects.
3. Hold a town hall for residents, parents and educators to overview the ongoing disaster, what symptoms to look out for that might be associated with landfill gasses, and how to best protect themselves and their children.
4. CASPER studies are a time-tested tool with guidance from the CDC that have been used not only in response to Aliso Canyon, but in multiple other health impact studies across LA County. We therefore urge a CASPER study be undertaken, modeled after the response to Aliso Canyon, that directly interviews residents across a broad geographic region to understand the scope of the impact of landfill gasses and identify regions of greatest concern.
5. Annual health studies to examine the longitudinal impact to the community throughout the anticipated decade or more that the reaction is anticipated to last.
6. As the lawsuit from LA County demonstrates, the County agrees that individuals should be provided assistance in leaving the areas impacted by the landfill. Therefore, LACDPH should reflect this through an order requiring Chiquita Canyon to pay for relocation of residents, schools, and home hardening to mitigate the impact of landfill gasses for the areas identified in #3.

Additionally, we urge the Board to declare a state of emergency (SOE). While statements from county representatives at local meetings have conveyed that LA County is responding as if a SOE is declared, we only have to look at the response to the Aliso Canyon gas leak or the LA fires this year, there is no comparison to the LACDPH public health response nor are other response and protections happening. So in the absence of an SOE, we request the LA BOS provide the below relief for residents.

1. A mechanism to reassess the tax base for homes and homeowners impacted by the landfill.
2. A letter that residents who have relocated may take to lending institutions to request mortgage forbearance.

If the Board will not take the above action, then the undersigned request written responses from the Board and LACDPH to the following questions.

1. Because community monitors during the Aliso Canyon emergency did not register levels of gasses above limits deemed dangerous to human health and safety, what specific differences exist for exposure in communities surrounding Chiquita Canyon that do not warrant a similar response?
2. In 2015, LACDPH made significant orders to support community relocation on odor complaints and complaints of symptoms to released gases. Why is LACDPH not responding with similar urgency for the communities surrounding Chiquita Canyon?

Reflective of the response of the Department in 2016 and of December 2024 discussions with LACDPH leadership, the symptoms being experienced by the people impacted by Chiquita Canyon Landfill should be our data and drive our response. We agree, and urge the Board of Supervisors to act accordingly and with urgency.

We appreciate your expedient response to this matter.

Sincerely,



PILAR SCHIAVO
Assemblymember, 40th District



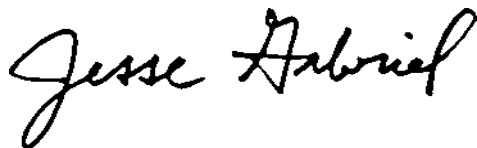
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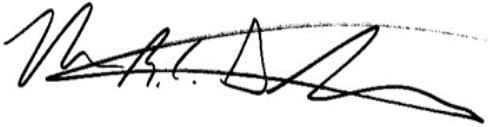
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CC: Dr. Barbra Ferrer – Director, LACDPH
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Kevin McGowan – Director, Office of Emergency Management
Ana Melendez, Deputy Secretary for Legislative Affairs, CalEPA