

COMMUNITY FACT SHEET

SBI LANDFILL ODOUR



Purpose of this community fact sheet

This fact sheet is to provide communities with information on the health impacts from odours from the SBI landfill in Cranbourne.

EPA Victoria has received many reports of strong 'rotten egg' gas odours from this landfill, characteristic of hydrogen sulfide, due to decaying waste. Nearby residents are concerned about the effects these odours may be having on their health.

Assessment

EPA authorised officers have been investigating and monitoring odour through a combination of olfactory methods and air testing. Olfactory monitoring is undertaken by olfactory scientists (odour experts) and EPA authorised officers, who have their sense of smell tested in accordance with EPA standard methods, before qualifying to do odour assessment in the field. It is important to note that the human nose is far more sensitive than any monitoring device available, and so it is likely that while the smell could be significant, monitoring equipment may not register any reduced sulphur compounds in the air.

Odour source & health effects

Exposure to hydrogen sulfide gas, which may be contributing to this odour, even at low concentrations, can cause various symptoms, including coughing, watery eyes, irritation of the eyes and throat, headaches and nausea. These symptoms may vary, depending on the amount, frequency and duration of exposure and the person being exposed. Vulnerable groups are more likely to be affected by this odour than others.

Odours can stimulate the central nervous system causing short-term, reversible physiological effects including triggering of asthma symptoms. These effects usually go away once the exposure to this odour stops.

This odour is not expected to have any long-term adverse health effects.

While this odour can be unpleasant, it is important to note that hydrogen sulfide odours can be smelt at a much lower concentration in air than the concentrations which can result in serious or longer term harmful effects.

A 2017 health study of Victorian landfills (<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/publications/1833-1>) did not show adverse health effects associated with living near a non-hazardous landfill. The study also found that some gaseous compounds released from landfills can be odorous even at low concentrations which may affect the wellbeing of the local community.

epa.vic.gov.au

Environment Protection Authority Victoria
Level 3, 14 Mason Street, Dandenong VIC 3175
1300 372 842



Health advice

- See your doctor if you are concerned about symptoms and/or health issues.
- Minimise exposure to this odour by keeping windows and doors closed, and limit outdoor activity, when odour is apparent.
- When there is no noticeable odour, it is advised to ventilate your house with clean air if/when possible.

Mental health

This odour can impact people's wellbeing and mental health. Some people are more affected than others. Those struggling to cope should seek help from their doctor, psychologist and/or a mental health support service.

Your pets

Impacts on pets are likely to vary. If you have any concerns about your pets, visit a vet to address their health concerns.

Further information

<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/incidents/sbi-inert-landfill>

<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/environmental-information/environmental-public-health/odour>

Further help

You can report excessive odours to EPA's 24-hour Hotline - 1300 372 842 (1300 EPA VIC)

If you feel unwell or distressed, consider contacting:

- call NURSE ON CALL on 1300 60 60 24
- your local doctor
- <https://headtohealthvic.org.au/our-locations/>
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636.