# Fire-like reaction at Chiquita Canyon Landfill expands to 90 acres, raising health and environmental concerns



In Los Angeles, the ongoing fire-like reaction at the Chiquita Canyon Landfill has now expanded to cover 90 acres, which is three times larger than previously reported by landfill officials, according to an expert analysis by CalRecycle. This significant growth in the landfill's thermal activity has raised concerns among residents, environmental authorities, and local government officials.

The sequence of this situation began in 2022 when the landfill started experiencing an elevated temperature reaction that has since pushed toxic gases and liquids into the surrounding environment. As a result, residents living just miles away have reported adverse health effects and have been subject to persistent noxious odours emanating from the site. The community has taken various measures to cope, such as keeping windows closed, purchasing air filters, and running air conditioning for extended periods. In response, the landfill had previously set up a relief fund intended to assist affected residents with financial burdens including the provision of air filters, but this program was closed earlier in 2024.

The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) issued new violations and an imminent and substantial endangerment order against Waste Management, the company operating the Chiquita Canyon Landfill. This order followed a CalRecycle report documenting the expansion of the hazardous reaction to 90 acres over the past year. Thanne Berg, deputy director of site mitigation and restoration for the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, emphasised the potential risks due to the presence of around 100 tanks on the landfill that store approximately 20,000 gallons of leachate, some of which is classified as hazardous waste. Berg expressed concerns about the landfill subsiding beneath these tanks, calling for immediate relocation measures. Operators have been given a 30-day deadline to present plans detailing how they intend to move the tanks, identify new locations for them, and extend the protective cover over the affected area.

Waste Management, through a statement on behalf of Chiquita Canyon Landfill, disputed several regulatory assertions and conclusions derived from the data. The company claimed that the data indicates their mitigation efforts have positively contributed to slowing the spread of the reaction. They conveyed their willingness to continue to collaborate with regulators to manage and reduce the environmental impacts.

Local political representatives have been active in responding to the crisis. State Assembly Member Pilar Schiavo, representing the area, delivered a letter on behalf of the Los Angeles County Delegation of Legislators requesting the county to declare a state of emergency over the landfill situation. Schiavo urged the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the County Department of Public Health, as the primary enforcement authority, to take swift and decisive action.

However, county officials have not supported the call for an emergency declaration. Supervisor Kathryn Barger responded to the legislative delegation's appeal, stating that a state of emergency would not provide additional resources or relief to the affected residents. She referenced communications from the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) that highlighted a state of emergency would not facilitate response efforts or individual assistance. Barger stressed the importance of managing community expectations and pointed to ongoing litigation as the current recourse, noting that the county has filed a lawsuit against the landfill operators and intends to await its outcome.

Community members like Jennifer Elkins continue to advocate for stronger intervention. Having engaged with both county supervisors and state legislators, including travelling to Sacramento to meet with officials, Elkins remains determined to find solutions. She said, "We went to Sacramento, we talked to the governor’s office, and they said, ‘no, you need to talk to your county representative. It’s the county’s responsibility. This is a Los Angeles county problem.’ So we’re back and we’re here and we’re telling them we’re not going away until we have an answer. We want to sit down. We want to have a conversation." Elkins voiced concern about the closure of the relief fund and the lack of alternatives to support the community, pointing out that many residents are suffering ongoing health issues related to the landfill's emissions.

The expanding size of the reaction, ongoing complaints about the odours, reported health impacts, and differing views between regulators, landfill operators, and government officials frame a complex and evolving environmental and public health issue within Los Angeles County. The community remains actively engaged in seeking resolution while authorities navigate regulatory, legal, and logistical challenges surrounding the landfill's situation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-finds-chiquita-canyon-landfill-presents-imminent-and-substantial-endangerment> - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an order on February 22, 2024, requiring Chiquita Canyon Landfill to take immediate steps to mitigate off-site community impacts caused by noxious odors and hazardous waste leachate, and to contain and reduce the smoldering or reaction event occurring at the landfill. This order reflects EPA's commitment to ensuring landfill operators mitigate noxious odors and comply with federal law to prevent public exposure to hazardous wastes.
* <https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2024-12-31/chiquita-canyon-landfill-will-no-longer-accept-trash-in-2025> - The Los Angeles Times reported on December 31, 2024, that Chiquita Canyon Landfill will cease accepting trash in 2025. The decision was influenced by the landfill's struggles to handle the fallout from a rare chemical reaction causing underground fires, which led to foul-smelling gases drifting into nearby communities and damaged the landfill's gas control systems.
* <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/neighbors-living-near-chiquita-canyon-landfill-say-fumes-are-causing-cancer-cluster/> - CBS Los Angeles reported on residents living near Chiquita Canyon Landfill expressing concerns that fumes from the landfill are causing a cancer cluster. Residents have reported health issues such as eye irritation, respiratory symptoms, and skin issues, and have called for a state of emergency declaration due to the potential health impacts of the toxic fumes escaping from the landfill.
* <https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2024-08-30/regulators-fault-chiquita-canyon-landfill-for-worsening-odor> - The Los Angeles Times reported on August 30, 2024, that environmental regulators faulted Chiquita Canyon Landfill for worsening odors. Despite efforts to mitigate the smoldering conditions affecting 30 acres of the landfill, pungent odors persisted and were reported in neighborhoods several miles away, leading to increased odor complaints and violations issued by the air district.
* <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/la-county-sues-chiquita-canyon-landfill-owners-over-chemicals-gases-hurting-health-of-residents/> - CBS Los Angeles reported on December 16, 2024, that Los Angeles County filed a lawsuit against Chiquita Canyon Landfill owners over chemicals and gases harming residents' health. The lawsuit alleges that hazardous chemicals, including benzene, have been released into the air, leading to health issues such as headaches, nausea, and respiratory problems among nearby residents.
* <https://www.hometownstation.com/santa-clarita-latest-news/chiquita-canyon-landfill-to-end-community-relief-program-in-february-2025-2-538829> - Hometown Station reported on February 28, 2025, that Chiquita Canyon Landfill's Community Relief Program, initiated in March 2024 to assist residents with odor mitigation costs, is set to conclude at the end of February 2025. The program provided financial aid for temporary relocation, home hardening, increased utility bills, and air filtration devices, distributing over $25 million and more than 1,000 air filters to affected households.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMimgFBVV95cUxQSUNtR3lLTWxZMEgtUms5UDNadWdqSEpGVlZaRTlUdnRXY2RYNHJ0YVh3eGl4eHRfRUFPQlBva3BQWkROUW5LckxQMDdYcnViT1MyeWYtRW1zd1pMaEk4QTdzR2NXUmdrQXBJVzlLMVo1WGE5S25tNkRKUTlsdklDNU1EbkdBb1hTZ0JOSnhyS0FOVExKUjU5T0hB?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data