

# Wedgewood Community Update

Draft Florida Department of Health Report Now Available

Rolling Hills Landfill, Pensacola

March 2015



*View of the landfill from the Wedgewood community center*

Based on air testing near the Rolling Hills Landfill, the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) now has a draft health report for review. The report evaluates possible health effects in the nearby Wedgewood community from hydrogen sulfide ( $H_2S$ ) between July and December 2014. (Learn more about the landfill on the back page.)

## ***FDOH finds:***

- The hydrogen sulfide levels in air near the Rolling Hills Landfill between July 21 and December 31, 2014 were a public health hazard. Breathing the highest level of  $H_2S$  measured (590 ppb) near the landfill for 30 minutes is too high to rule out the possibility of headaches or irritation of the nose or throat.

- $H_2S$  levels near the landfill are often above the point at which people can smell it. The lowest level at which people can smell  $H_2S$  is 0.6 parts per billion (ppb).

- $H_2S$  levels in the air near the landfill are highest at night when the wind is still. The  $H_2S$  levels mostly went down between July and December and as the weather cooled.  $H_2S$  levels may go up again when it gets warmer. Levels may also go up if there is more rain, more sheetrock placed in the landfill, less landfill cover is used, or if other landfill operations change.

- Nearby residents are concerned about heart problems, kidney problems, and cancer. It is unlikely, however, the highest levels of  $H_2S$  measured near the landfill caused these health problems.
- It is uncertain if levels of  $H_2S$  measured in the air near the landfill caused eye irritation and respiratory problems.
- It cannot conclude what the public health threat was before July 2014 as no air monitoring was done before that time. It also cannot determine the health threat from pollutants other than  $H_2S$ .
- Airborne dust can cause breathing and heart problems in older people, the very young, and people with asthma or heart disease. However, since FDOH has little to no dust testing data, we cannot assess the public health threat due to dust.

## ***FDOH Recommends***

Landfill staff should keep the levels of  $H_2S$  levels below 70 ppb in the nearby Wedgewood community.

While the Rolling Hills Landfill remains active, Escambia County should:

- Keep testing the air for  $H_2S$  around-the-clock in the Wedgewood community.
- Test for airborne dust near the landfill.

***Learn more about the draft report at an informal open house Friday, March 27, 2015 at the Marie K. Young-Wedgewood Community Center, 6405 Wagner Road, Pensacola. Come at your convenience anytime from 3:00 to 7:30 p.m. Talk one-on-one with FDOH staff, see posters about the report, and tell us your health concerns.***

***Please give your comments on the draft FDOH report by April 30, 2015.***

### ***What will the FDOH do?***

- Address health concerns in a final report.
- Let nearby residents know when a final report is ready.
- Consider review of new data.

### ***Site History***

The 166-acre Rolling Hills Landfill is at 6990 Rolling Hills Road in Pensacola. It lies south of Interstate 10, and west of U.S. 29 (Pensacola Boulevard). In the 1950s, people began moving into nearby homes that became the Wedgewood community. Over time, a number of landfills, as well as borrow pits, began to surround the area. In 1990, Gulf Coast Paving & Grading Inc. first opened a landfill at the site of a former borrow pit. In 2007, South Palafox Properties, LLC bought the site. It takes in construction and demolition (C&D) debris. About 40 acres of the landfill are in use. For many years, residents have complained about odors, noise, safety concerns, and dust related to the Rolling Hills Landfill.

Community health concerns include:

- Cancer (including brain tumors)
- Respiratory (breathing) problems
- Renal (kidney) failure
- Cardiac (heart) problems
- Headaches
- Eye irritation

In April 2014, over two feet of rain fell in the Pensacola area within 24 hours. The rain caused severe flooding. Afterward, the Rolling Hills Landfill took in large amounts of damaged drywall. When drywall rots, it gives off H<sub>2</sub>S gas. It has a distinct “rotten egg” smell.

In July 2014, as a result of odor complaints, Escambia County began to measure daytime levels of H<sub>2</sub>S near the landfill. On July 22, 2014, FDOH-Escambia put out a health alert advising people with eye, nose, or throat irritation to stay inside. They lifted the alert two weeks later after H<sub>2</sub>S levels dropped. In September, Escambia County began recording H<sub>2</sub>S levels around-the-clock at the nearby Wedgewood Community Center.

In late July, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) revoked the landfill’s permit. They cited the landfill for failing to contain odors, fouling surface water, and taking in certain material.

### ***FDOH’s Role at Hazardous Waste Sites***

The FDOH works to guard public health. We share facts from studies on toxic chemicals to help people who live near hazardous waste sites stay safe. If we find a health threat, we make sure to let people who live nearby know about it as soon as possible.

### ***For More Information***

**About health or to comment on the draft FDOH health report, contact:** Debby Tipton, FDOH health scientist: call toll-free at 877-798-2772 or email her at: [PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov](mailto:PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov)

**About H<sub>2</sub>S monitoring, contact:** Brent Wipf, Escambia County, Community & Environment Division: call 850-595-3445 or email him at: [BAWIPF@myescambia.com](mailto:BAWIPF@myescambia.com)

Please share this community update with your friends and neighbors!

**Comment on the draft health report. To get a copy or to send comments, please call toll-free 877-798-2772, visit [hazwaste.floridahealth.gov](http://hazwaste.floridahealth.gov), or send an email to [PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov](mailto:PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov). Comments are due April 30, 2015.**



***Comments are due by April 30, 2015***

**Comments about the Rolling Hills C&D Landfill, Pensacola**

**PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ANSWER FOR EACH QUESTION:**

1. I learned more about the Rolling Hills Landfill.

**Yes                  Mostly                  Some                  No**

2. I learned that a draft health report about hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) levels from the Rolling Hills Landfill measured in outdoor air near the Wedgewood Community Center is ready for review and comment.

**Yes                  Mostly                  Some                  No**

3. I learned more about the FDOH's plans at this site.

**Yes                  Mostly                  Some                  No**

4. I learned more about the part the FDOH plays at the site.

**Yes                  Mostly                  Some                  No**

5. I learned how to submit comments on the draft FDOH report.

**Yes                  Mostly                  Some                  No**

My current health concerns about the Rolling Hills Landfill are:

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What health topics would you like to learn about? (Please list)

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**Optional (so we can contact you later, if needed)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Pensacola, FL ZIP code: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill this form out, fold in thirds, tape or staple shut, add a postage stamp, and mail to the address on the back of this page. Or, save a stamp by calling our toll-free number (877-798-2772) to give us your comments or by sending them via email to [PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov](mailto:PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov).

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Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ State\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE PLACE  
FIRST CLASS  
POSTAGE HERE**

Debby Tipton  
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Public Health Toxicology  
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