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Results of Air Quality Study at Saufley Landfill Released

PENSACOLA -- The Escambia County Health Department now has scientific confirmation that symptoms and signs reported by residents near the Saufley Construction and Demolition Debris Landfill are related to increased levels of hydrogen sulfide gas in the air. This scientific confirmation that comes in the form of a report issued by the Florida Department of Health and the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry on results of the air quality study performed in recent months at the landfill.

The health alert regarding hydrogen sulfide, which was issued in November 2006, remains in effect.

Conclusions, Recommendations

The report concludes that hydrogen sulfide gas, which comes from landfill decay and the smoke from landfill fires, is a public health hazard for nearby residents. The report confirms that there are health effects – such as headaches, breathing difficulty in people with asthma, and increased hospital visits by children with asthma – for exposure to hydrogen sulfide. The report recommends the following for residents near the landfill:

- 1.) Stop community members' airborne exposure to hydrogen sulfide as soon as possible.
- 2.) Reduce the threat of fire and explosion that exists on the landfill and/or from landfill operations.
- 3.) Develop contingency plans with emergency response personnel to either shelter-in-place or evacuate community members based on hydrogen sulfide readings.
- 4.) Begin real-time hydrogen sulfide monitoring to determine if/when immediate health decision should be made (e.g. shelter-in-place, evacuate)
- 5.) Restrict community access to the landfill.

The report also recommends the following actions for landfill workers and other personnel who access the landfill:

- 1.) Utilize personal air monitors for hydrogen sulfide, Lower Explosive Level/Oxygen, and carbon monoxide. Monitors with alarms are preferable.

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- 2.) Train workers on the use of appropriate personnel protective equipment such as supplied-air full face respirators.
- 3.) Actively integrate landfill status into the community response plan.

Next Steps

The health department will assist federal, state, and local agencies -- including the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and county officials – in implementing the report recommendations.

For More Information

- To read the report, log onto the health department's website at www.EscambiaHealth.com.
- For health concerns, contact your physician.
- If you have questions about the report, contact the health department at 595-6683.

