Governor Newsom and Chair Randolph: Reduce Methane Emissions from California Landfills Now

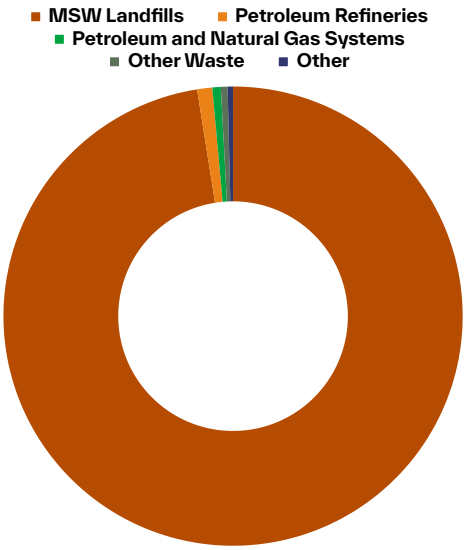
The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has an opportunity to set a nation-leading standard for finding, capturing, and controlling dangerous methane leaks from landfills.

Why act on landfill methane?

Across California and the country, waste is piling up in landfills, creating massive amounts of the super-polluting greenhouse gas, methane. Methane's 20-year warming potential is more than 80 times greater than carbon dioxide — and we know that the next 20 years are vital for meeting global science-based targets and mitigating the worst impacts of climate change. In fact, reducing methane emissions is the single most impactful action we can take right now to pump the brakes on global warming.

Landfill methane in California by the numbers

- California ranks 2nd in the nation for methane emissions from municipal solid waste (MSW) landfills
- 97% of California's large industrial methane emissions come from MSW landfills
- California's municipal solid waste methane emissions are estimated at 21 million metrics tons of CO2 equivalent: about the same as 5 million passenger cars driven for a year
- In California, people of color are more than twice as likely to live near a landfill, compared to white populations.



Share of industrial methane emissions in California

California's opportunity

14 years ago, California led on landfill methane reduction by enacting landfill methane regulations stronger than the federal standards, including common-sense improvements like a tighter walking pattern for detecting methane emissions. Now, thanks to advances in technology and lessons learned, California has the opportunity to set the bar higher, implementing proven, cost-effective solutions to curb methane emissions, slow global warming, and protect California communities. First, we need CARB to begin a formal rulemaking process to update its 2010 Landfill Methane Rule.

California's updated methane rules should:

- Require the use of remote sensing technology, such as drones, that make finding large methane leaks exponentially easier to find and fix and improve human safety;
- Utilize the significant advancement in remote sensing technologies to expand the frequency and scope of surface emissions monitoring to cover the entire landfill surface (including previously excluded steep slopes and working face) much more frequently;
- Require minimizing gas collection system downtime;
- Similar to the EPA rules for the oil and gas industry, require landfills to identify and correct leaks from "super emitters" identified by credible third parties or through the state's pioneering Methane Satellite initiative;
- Require earlier installation of gas capture and control systems and frequent monitoring for gas collection system leaks;
- Require landfills to implement a cover design plan and place more protective cover sooner; to slow methane emissions;
- Prohibit the use of practices that accelerate landfill methane generation, including the use of bioreactors and other forms of leachate recirculation, along with the intentional landfilling of organics materials as cover;
- Reduce allowable emissions by lowering the methane concentration limit from 500 ppm to 200 ppm
- Improve wellhead requirements to reduce the risk of harmful fires or subsurface smoldering events at landfills

For more information and data sources, visit dontwasteourfuture.org/california-dashboard