

Methane Investigation at H.G. Lavelle Landfill

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is working with the owner of the H.G. LaVelle Landfill to address elevated methane along portions of the landfill boundary.

Background

From 1972 to 1982, Rose City Sand & Gravel operated a demolition landfill at NE 82nd Avenue and NE Siskiyou Street, just north of the Madison Place subdivision. The landfill has been closed for over 25 years, and post-closure landfill gas monitoring continues under a Solid Waste Disposal Site Closure permit issued by DEQ.

In cooperation with the current owner of the H.G. Lavelle Landfill, who purchased the property in 1998, DEQ is further evaluating methane gas levels in the soil at the landfill's property line, as well as in enclosed spaces in structures adjacent to the landfill's southern boundary.

The landfill received demolition debris until its 1982 closure. Wastes included inert material such as brick and concrete, as well as some organic matter such as plants and wood. DEQ records also indicate that a limited amount of household waste was disposed of at the landfill site, contrary to DEQ permit requirements that were in effect in the 1970s and 1980s.

When organic matter decomposes, it often produces methane gas which can rise to the ground's surface at a closed landfill. For this reason, DEQ requires closed landfills to monitor for methane for many years following closure. Natural gas, used in our homes, is composed mainly of methane. Since the landfill closed, accepted protocols for measuring methane gas have also changed.

Status of our investigation

DEQ and the landfill owner have tested for methane at the property line, in the confined spaces of utility vaults and in the crawl spaces beneath some of the ten buildings closest to the landfill on the north side of NE Knott Street. No methane has been found in the confined spaces in and around the Knott Street homes. However, elevated methane has been found in methane monitoring wells at the property line nearest those homes on the north side of NE Knott Street.

Methane can become a safety risk when it migrates into enclosed spaces such as in-ground utility service boxes, utility conduits, and unvented crawl spaces beneath buildings.

Therefore, DEQ will continue to monitor for methane gas. Work is underway to expand and improve the existing extraction system to remove landfill gas before it leaves the property.

What are the potential risks for Madison Place residents?

Methane is a flammable gas. In some circumstances, the presence of methane in a closed space may pose an explosion hazard. In-ground utility boxes or utility buildings built on the soil may provide enclosed spaces for methane vapors to concentrate.

As a safety measure, homes in the Madison Place subdivision were supposed to have been built with methane controls such as vapor barriers in crawl spaces and hard-wired or battery operated methane gas detectors. If a vapor barrier has deteriorated, methane gas could get in a crawl space.

As a precaution, Madison Place residents should make sure that crawl space vents are open, and confirm the presence of the required protections. Enclosed spaces should be aired out before entering or inspecting those areas. Residents should not smoke or light a fire while working in enclosed spaces where there is the potential for methane to concentrate.

For more information

If you have any questions or would like more information, call DEQ Project Manager Bob Schwarz at (541) 298-7255 ext. 230, or toll free at 800-452-4011. He can also be reached by email at schwarz.bob@deq.state.or.us.

Alternative formats

Alternative formats (Braille, large type) of this document can be made available. Contact the DEQ Office of Communications & Outreach, Portland, at (503) 229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696.



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