



Public Health
England



News release

Walleys Quarry Air Quality Monitoring Report for March released.

The Environment Agency and Public Health England air quality monitoring reports for March have been released to the public.

The data has been used to assess the type, time and nature of the emissions from the site. This information has been shared between Environment Agency, Public Health England, Staffordshire County Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, which is vital for us to tackle the issues of odour coming from the operations of Walleys Quarry Landfill, Silverdale.

After a peak in the recorded levels of hydrogen sulphide on the 7 and 8 March, levels of this gas have remained below the World Health Organisation's (WHO) *health* based guidance levels for the rest of the month. The report also shows that for 38% of the time at the Galingale View station, odour levels are above the WHO's *annoyance* based guidance levels, and for 22% of the time at Silverdale Road station, which means complaints about odour annoyance can be expected.

Indicative data for April, continues to show hydrogen sulphide levels below the WHO health-based standard but, at times, is above the WHO annoyance threshold.

Dr Nic Coetzee, Health Protection Consultant with Public Health England (PHE) Midlands, said:

"PHE appreciates the ongoing situation concerning strong odours in areas around Walleys Quarry Landfill must be very distressing for residents. Air quality data analysed for March does not indicate any serious impacts to long-term physical health, however some people may experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches or dizziness. People who have health conditions which affect breathing may experience increased frequency and/or severity of symptoms – if people have any health concerns, they should contact their local GP or ring NHS111. It is important to acknowledge that this kind of persistent, unpleasant odour can affect people's mental wellbeing, causing stress, anxiety, problems sleeping and disruption to general activities.

"Along with supporting the Environment Agency to interpret any monitoring data and identify any potential impact on health, PHE is also working with Staffordshire County Council and the local NHS to quantify the impact on the health and wellbeing of residents, to inform any further action. Public health partners are collaborating on a monitoring study of health conditions in the population potentially affected by the Walleys Quarry landfill, collecting data of patient attendances at local GP practices."

Clare Dinnis, West Midlands Area Director with the Environment Agency said:

“We know and understand how much the odour from the operations at Walleys Quarry is impacting people’s lives. We’re holding Red Industries to account for their operations and doing everything within our power to bring its operation into compliance as quickly as possible.

“Monitoring is an important part of our regulation: monitoring and odour checks led to us to issue Red Industries with an enforcement notice requiring them to put solutions in place to minimise odour from the landfill.

“In the coming weeks, there will be a site emissions survey, to assess odour levels after Red Industries have completed the capping works. If odour remains, we will take further steps to make sure Red Industries effectively manage odour from the site.”

To provide all multi-agency partners with robust data about air quality to inform their response to odours, Staffordshire County Council, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council along with the Environment Agency have jointly funded two additional air quality monitoring units. All four units will be in place until at least the end of August and will contribute to future air quality reports.

-Ends-

Notes for editors:

PHE report: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/walleys-quarry-landfill-silverdale/>

See [Staffordshire County Council website](#) for public health information on the impacts of odours in the Silverdale and wider Newcastle under Lyme area.

The data was collected from two Environment Agency air quality monitoring units placed at:

- Silverdale Road
- Galingale View

The data for the March report has been collected from two specialist air quality mobile monitoring units which are collecting monitoring data continuously. They monitor parameters related to landfill gasses, including methane (CH₄) particulates (PM) and hydrogen sulphide (H₂S). The units also have a weather station which records wind speed, direction, temperature and pressure. The locations of the units were chosen in places where there has been a high level of reports.

The WHO states that “in order to avoid substantial complaints about odour annoyance among the exposed population, hydrogen sulphide concentrations should not be allowed to exceed 7 µg/m³, with a 30-minute averaging period”.

Additional air quality units are now at:

- Silverdale Cemetery
- Newcastle Community fire station.

Hydrogen sulphide occurs both naturally and through human activity and is a trace gas commonly found in landfill gas which causes the rotten egg smell. Hydrogen sulphide can be smelt at much lower concentrations than the levels that cause harm.

After the peak in hydrogen sulphide levels on the 7 and 8 March, enforcement action has been taken against Walleys Quarry Landfill requiring them to permanently cap part of the site and temporarily cap another part of the site. Red Industries have until midnight on Friday 30

April to carry out the actions in the enforcement notice. The Environment Agency will assess whether that work has been appropriately completed.

From Public Health England's independent assessment of the Environment Agency's monitoring data:

Exposure to concentrations of hydrogen sulphide above the WHO 24-hour health-based guideline value does not necessarily mean health effects will occur. But these values could potentially cause notable discomfort and irritation.

Based on the current data up to the end of March PHE would stress that any risk to long-term physical health is likely to be small, however it cannot completely exclude a risk to health from pollutants in the area. Short-term health effects may be experienced such as irritation to the eyes, nose and throat. Individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions may be more susceptible to these effects.

The monitoring results for particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide were below UK air quality objectives. Therefore, there would be negligible/minimal risks to health at these levels of exposure.

Multi-agency roles and responsibilities

- The Environment Agency regulates the two environmental permits held by Red Industries RM Limited ('the operator') for the landfill. The permit covers on-site activities with the aim of minimising the impact on the local environment in terms of air quality, noise, odour, dust, leachate and impacts to groundwater. We enforce that permit through monitoring and undertaking site visits (both announced and unannounced) and where needed we take enforcement action to address compliance issues.
- Staffordshire County Council is responsible for determining and monitoring planning permission. It is also responsible for improving the health of the county's population.
- Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council is responsible for regularly monitoring air quality across the area, to ensure that it does not impact human health.
- Public Health England (PHE) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

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The Environment Agency – the leading organisation for protecting and improving the environment in England – has a 5-year plan for achieving a cleaner, greener and healthier future. Read more about how we are becoming climate resilient, improving the health of air, land and water for people and nature, and supporting sustainable green growth [here](#).