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Air District fines City of Berkeley Landfill for air quality violations

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District announced today that it has fined the City of Berkeley $130,000 for air quality violations that occurred at its landfill site at Cesar Chavez Park in Berkeley from 2019 - 2022.

The $130,000 penalty covers seven violations in total, including six involving failures of the landfill's gas collection system and one for failing to submit emissions testing results.

"Stopping harmful landfill gases from escaping into the air is critical for the health of the community and the climate," said Dr. Philip Fine, executive officer of the Air District. "The Air District will ensure that the City of Berkeley Landfill meets its obligation to protect air quality and complies with all air quality regulations."

The landfill gas collection system extracts methane and other gases created by the decomposition of organic materials and funnels them through a system of wells and pipes to a flare, which burns off the gases before they enter the atmosphere or cause odors.

The problems involving failure of the gas collection system occurred due to the landfill's lack of a backup power supply during a power outage. They varied in duration from two hours to four and a half days.

In addition to these violations, on February 16, 2024, the Air District's Hearing Board ordered the City of Berkeley Landfill to fix a number of other problems with the landfill gas collection system, including repairing gas collection wells, upgrading inspection and monitoring procedures, conducting a drone study to search for gas leaks, and evaluating whether landfill gas is seeping offsite.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

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