

Advice for Residents Living Near Spicer Landfill

National Public Health Service, Wellington Region

- The National Public Health Service, Wellington Region, is aware that residents living near the Spicer Landfill are experiencing an increase in the number of times they are impacted by odour from the landfill.
- To date, Porirua City Council report that the landfill gas capture system is working well. This means that gas levels beyond the boundary are likely to be at very low levels. Due to the increase in reports of odour, there are ongoing investigations around the potential sources and control measures to improve odour management.
- Landfill gases are produced when bacteria break down organic waste. Ninety-nine per cent of landfill gas is methane and carbon dioxide. The remaining one per cent is made up of over 500 trace components that produce a distinctive odour. Humans can smell very low levels of these odour producing trace components.
- Being able to smell odour at such low levels does not usually cause health effects. However, some people can experience physical symptoms such as nausea and headaches from exposure to odour. In addition, exposure to unpleasant odours can be stressful and frustrating, and for some people stress can be associated with feeling physically unwell.
- Exposure to landfill gas at low levels is unlikely to result in long term adverse health effects. Methane is not known to cause any long term health effects like cancer or birth defects.
- When odours are present for a period of time, some people become accustomed to the smell and can no longer detect it, while others can become sensitised to it. Sensitisation means that people can still be affected even when the odour decreases in intensity or concentration.
- It is helpful to keep an [odour diary](https://porirua.govt.nz/services/rubbish-and-recycling/spicer-landfill/spicer-landfill-odour/) (available at <https://porirua.govt.nz/services/rubbish-and-recycling/spicer-landfill/spicer-landfill-odour/>) as this information can support the investigation into the potential source of the odour and actions to reduce the level of odour.
- While the odour issue is being investigated and ways are found to reduce the odour, it is important that you look after your well-being. We recommend you see your family doctor if you are concerned about symptoms associated with the odour.
- It is helpful to keep a record of any symptoms you (or other household members) experience related to odour, and how long they last (e.g. do symptoms stop once the odour is gone or not?). This information can also be recorded in the [odour diary](#). For a doctor's appointment, take any records you have kept and this health advice information sheet.
- If your doctor is concerned that your health issues may be directly due to chemical or particle exposures, with your permission, they can report this to us for further investigation.
- To raise a concern or make a complaint regarding the odour see: <https://porirua.govt.nz/services/rubbish-and-recycling/spicer-landfill/spicer-landfill-odour/>
- For further information on how odour is assessed and managed see: <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/Publications/good-practice-guide-odour.pdf>

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