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# Los Angeles County files suit ‘to stop the awful stench’ at Chiquita Canyon landfill



Contaminated liquids erupt onto the surface of Chiquita Canyon Landfill in Castaic in November 2023. (South Coast Air Quality Management District)

**By Tony Briscoe**  
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Los Angeles County is suing the owner of Chiquita Canyon Landfill for failing to control a high-temperature chemical reaction that is cooking garbage and sickening nearby residents.

For nearly two years, trash has been smoldering in a long-dormant portion of Chiquita Canyon due to the rare chemical reaction. The broiling temperatures have affected a roughly 30-acre area, where putrid gases and hazardous liquids have burst through the surface of the landfill.

Although regulators have ordered Chiquita Canyon staff to take steps to contain the reaction, many of their efforts have been delayed or have failed to stop the stench from drifting into the nearby communities of Castaic and Val Verde.



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On Monday, Los Angeles County filed a lawsuit against Chiquita Canyon's owner, Waste Connections, claiming that its efforts have not been sufficient to extinguish the smoldering reaction and end the ongoing public nuisance, which the landfill's staff acknowledges could persist for years.

"This lawsuit is a necessary step to ensure accountability and compliance with the rules that protect our residents and the environment," Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger said in a statement. "We must hold the responsible party accountable and continue doing everything possible to restore safe and healthy living conditions for our communities.

"While Federal, State, and County agencies are working around the clock with the landfill operator to mitigate this incident, it's clear that the ... mitigation measures have not brought a permanent stop to the awful stench that afflicts the surrounding

communities. This lawsuit is a powerful tool that demands the landfill owners bring immediate relief to impacted residents. They must step up efforts to take care of those that have been harmed by their facility.”

The county is seeking a court order to halt the noxious emissions as well as civil penalties for environmental and public health violations. If Chiquita Canyon fails to do so, the county is asking for the court to appoint a receiver “to take possession” and bring it into compliance, according to court documents.



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“Despite repeated enforcement actions and abatement orders, the landfill operators have not adequately addressed the situation,” said Dusan Pavlovic, senior deputy county counsel for Los Angeles County. “This lawsuit seeks to ensure immediate action to stop the harm. The resources that have been deployed in the community fall woefully short.”

Chiquita Canyon representatives could not be reached immediately for comment on the lawsuit.

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