

A Neighborhood's Long Struggle with a Offensive Landfill, Part IV

Part IV: Living the Lie

CLEVELAND, OHIO, UNITED STATES, April 28, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Lafarge, now called Holcim US, is a subsidiary of the largest cement producer in the world and the parent company of the Lordstown Landfill. In 2003, Lafarge converted a depleted slag operation in rural northeast Ohio into a demolition waste-only landfill (no garbage). Lafarge's consultant, Bowser Morner, designed the waste limits to the edges of the property and fifty feet below the surrounding area.

The design placed decomposing waste within a few hundred feet of homes and cut through two groundwater tables. Forty million gallons of groundwater were unleashed inside the landfill and pumps were installed against Ohio EPA regulations.

Toxic hydrogen sulfide gas was created shortly after operations began and engulfed the neighborhoods. Odor and illness complaints were filed by the dozens but Lafarge denied responsibility; swamp gas, oil wells, chicken farms, fertilized fields, sewer lines and septic tanks were blamed. Violation letters were sent by the Ohio EPA but there were no real consequences.

Lafarge performs no environmental audits of its waste shippers and their customers know it.

In the spring of 2012, a distraught landfill manager naively sent senior management several detailed, fact-filled internal reports on the groundwater situation, the pulverized waste and the landfill gas. The reports were not received well or apparently believed. He was removed from his position and sent elsewhere and assigned unrelated responsibilities.

Lordstown Landfill Toxic Gas Composition			
		LCR's shallow landfill gas was sampled >48 times in 2019 and analyzed by a certified laboratory. These results have been submitted to the Ohio EPA and are part of the public record as of 12/2019.	
Landfill Gas Name	Maximum Gas Concentration in parts per billion (ppb) as detected in shallow LCR Landfill gas	Toxicity	Formula
Hydrogen Sulfide	39,000,000 ppb	Hydrogen sulfide is the chemical compound with the formula H ₂ S. It is a colorless chalcogen hydride gas with the characteristic foul odor of rotten eggs. It is poisonous, corrosive, and flammable. LCR's value is more than 100x OSHA's threat to health and life limit.	H ₂ S
Carbon Disulfide	90,000 ppb	Carbon disulfide is severely irritating to the eyes, mucous membranes, and skin. Acute neurological effects may result from all routes of exposure and may include headache, confusion, psychosis, and coma. Acute exposure to extremely high levels of carbon disulfide may result in respiratory failure and death.	CS ₂
Carbonyl Sulfide	23,000 ppb	Carbonyl sulfide is a colorless, poisonous, flammable gas with a distinct sulfide odor. The gas is toxic and narcotic in low concentrations and presents a moderate fire hazard.	CS
Isopropyl Mercaptan	110,000 ppb	Chronic aquatic toxicity: Isopropyl Mercaptan: Very toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects.	
Methyl Mercaptan	49,000 ppb	The main toxic effect of exposure to methyl mercaptan is irritation of the respiratory airway, skin, and eyes.	
Lordstown Landfill Toxic Gas Composition			
Thiophene	32,000 ppb	The acute and subacute toxicity data for thiophene in animals identify the nervous system and the liver as target organs for its toxicity.	C6H4S
n-propyl Mercaptan	39,000 ppb	n-Propyl Mercaptan: Aspiration toxicity: May be harmful if swallowed and enters airways. n-Propyl Mercaptan: Further information: Symptoms of overexposure may be headache, dizziness, tiredness, nausea and vomiting.	
2-Ethylthiophene	4,900 ppb	Based on this 90-day oral toxicity study in rats, the no-observed-adverse-effect level (NOAEL) for 2-ethylthiophene-2-carboxaldehyde administered	C6H8S
Dimethyl Disulfide	1,000 ppb	DMSDS has low toxicity when inhaled or when the skin is exposed to it. The primary health effect of DMSDS is irritation of the nose and upper respiratory tract. The EPA concluded that a concentration of 2000 in air of 50 parts per billion (ppb) or less is not expected to cause irritation or other health effects.	C2H6S2
Ethyl Mercaptan	2,200 ppb	Higher levels can cause dizziness, lightheadedness, coma and death. * Ethyl Mercaptan may damage the liver and kidneys. * Repeated or long term exposure to Ethyl Mercaptan may damage the red blood cells causing anemia. * Ethyl Mercaptan is a HIGHLY FLAMMABLE LIQUID or GAS and a DANGEROUS FIRE HAZARD.	
Diethyl Sulfide	< 1,000 ppb	Diethyl Sulfide can affect you when breathing and by passing through your skin. * Contact can irritate the skin and eyes. * Breathing Diethyl Sulfide can irritate the nose and throat causing coughing and wheezing. * Diethyl Sulfide is a FLAMMABLE LIQUID and a FIRE HAZARD.	C2H6S
Tert-butyl Mercaptan	< 1,000 ppb	Toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects. Classification: Flammable liquids, Category 2. Acute toxicity, Category 5, Oral. Serious eye damage	
Isobutyl Mercaptan	< 1,000 ppb	Breathing isobutyl mercaptan for 1 hour caused symptoms of CNS toxicity; all reported muscular weakness and malaise, flushing of the face.	C4H10S

The long list of concentrated toxic gases found at the Lordstown Landfill in 2019. Most residents know about hydrogen sulfide, few know about the others.

In an effort to prove the landfill was not responsible, the first landfill gas study was completed by Lafarge personnel in December 2014. Several hundred hydrogen sulfide readings were taken on a 100' x 100' grid system. Many readings over 1,000 parts per billion were recorded (rotten egg odors start at 10 parts per billion) and numerous readings exceeded the gas meters' limits. Again, the results were disbelieved.

In 2015, the Ohio EPA performed comprehensive inspection of the Lordstown Landfill. The inspectors found unacceptable pulverized and solid wastes, rancid odors and a 400 foot firehouse pumping 100,000 gallons/day of ammonia-contaminated water from under the landfill into a pond connected to Duck Creek.



Lordstown Landfill's low-budget gas system has chronic failures. Pipes burst, valves and control systems malfunction allowing highly concentrated toxic gases to escape.

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I found my personal and religious items taken from my desk, thrown in the trash, and my office floor covered in urine. My corporate supervisor would not take action”

Previous Lafarge Manager

The Ohio EPA finally marched into genuine enforcement action against Lafarge. A 45-page consent order was proposed in early 2016; if Ohio EPA orders are "negotiated" then the polluters waive appeal rights. A fine of \$2.8 million was proposed, along with a limit of 20 ppb hydrogen sulfide at the landfill boundary, monthly gas surveys, the control of spilled railcar waste, the investigation of ponds for contamination, the installation of groundwater wells, a remedy for the groundwater pumping, the detailed tracking of complaints and the funding of additional post-closure financial assurance.

The proposed fine was reduced by an astounding 90% to \$270,000 but the other draft orders held and were issued on 11/23/2016.

The banished manager was brought back to Lordstown to “advise” on the many consent order projects. The manager, who wishes to remain anonymous, was not welcomed back by local management. The manager says he was prohibited to speak to any inspectors, was screamed at, and claims, "I found my personal and religious items taken from my desk, thrown in the trash, and my office floor covered in urine. My corporate supervisor would not take action".

The Ohio EPA's inspector was hospitalized in 2017 after visiting the Lordstown Landfill and taking gas measurements. From 2016 to 2019, the Ohio EPA sent a staggering 21 Notices of Violations to Lafarge citing more than 300 violations.

Lafarge has chronic management turnover and so does its landfill. But the new teams were as deliberately uncaring as the previous. Unidentifiable wastes were still arriving and neighbors were still screaming about the stench.

[The Ohio EPA issued another 15-page consent order on 10/30/2019](#) which required Lafarge to install a landfill gas extraction system to control emissions.

Many disposal companies install these systems as standard procedure but after 15 years and innumerable complaints, Lafarge had still resisted.

To understand the nature of Lordstown's landfill gas, more than 50 shallow subsurface gas samples were lab analyzed. Hydrogen sulfide, H₂S, the typical odor-causing culprit, was detected at an eye-popping 39,000,000 parts per billion — many times higher than OSHA's instant-death limit.

Worse yet, other toxic sulfide gases, which cannot be detected by the meters, were found in high concentrations. Gases such as carbon disulfide, carbonyl sulfide, mercaptans and thiophene were present along with high levels of methane and carbon dioxide. High levels of methane are typically only associated with garbage landfills. These results were reported to the Ohio EPA but apparently were not shared with the landfill's neighbors.

In 2020 Lafarge attempted to install a low-budget landfill gas control system. However, the moisture from saturated wastes combines with hydrogen sulfide to create sulfuric acid. The acid corroded gas system components; pumps failed, pipes burst, control systems malfunctioned and raw, ultra-concentrated subsurface gases were repeatedly released. The system failures actually made the neighborhood problems worse and intensified the on-site safety issues.

The landfill's terrain is moon-like, the winds constantly shift and the gas emission points are extremely unpredictable. Unfortunately, Lafarge did not have landfill safety experts perform any



Black "veins" where ultra-concentrated hydrogen sulfide "ate" through the soil barrier at the Lordstown Landfill. Toxic gas pours out of these veins making matters worse.

gas-impact studies or provide the appropriate PPE. The many system failures exposed workers and managers alike to multiple toxic gases. In late 2020, the advising manager was also overcome by landfill gas and was hospitalized.

Based upon a 16-page verified complaint filed in June 2021 by a previous Lafarge employee, the Ohio EPA performed another intensive inspection of the Lordstown Landfill. [In October 2021 three separate Notices of Violation](#) with 14 different regulatory citations were issued to Lafarge. The violations included disposing of pulverized waste, contaminating surface water, uncovered wastes piled 25 feet high, uncontrolled dust and stormwater failures. Violations have continued into 2022 for odors, elevated hydrogen sulfide and stream pollution.

After nearly two decades, hundreds of violations and countless complaints, the neighbors of Lafarge's landfill are exasperated. They feel defeated. Their children have grown up knowing only stink and false promises. They have learned not to trust corporations or believe in government agencies.

You can't blame them.

Next: Conclusion "The Nature of the Beast"

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