

# Landfill ordered to close by 2011

**Health department rules after complaints about rotten-egg odor from south Overland Park site.**

By **BRAD COOPER**  
The Kansas City Star

A south Overland Park landfill that spewed a smelly, toxic gas must close by 2010 to protect the health of thousands of residents, state regulators have ruled.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has issued a conditional permit allowing APAC-Kansas to run the 167th Street landfill until Dec. 31, 2010. The landfill must be capped six months later.

The ruling closes the landfill 10 years earlier than APAC wanted, after residents flooded the state with complaints about the rotten-egg smell caused by hydrogen sulfide emanating from the landfill.

It is only one of four landfills of its kind nationwide with a hydrogen sulfide problem of that magnitude, a state official said Wednesday.

At low levels, hydrogen sulfide can irritate the eyes, lead to headaches and affect the breathing of those afflicted with asthma. Lengthy exposure to high concentrations can cause significant health problems, even death.

Roughly 6,000 people live near the landfill, including software developer Rick Lucas, who blames the landfill for respiratory problems that he and

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his children have suffered. He's glad to see it will be closing.

"It's the right call. I don't think it's realistic for them to shut their doors tomorrow," Lucas said Wednesday.

Repeated efforts to reach APAC for comment Wednesday were unsuccessful.

The conditional permit must be signed by APAC before it is official. If APAC chooses not to accept the conditional operating terms, it would have to operate under its current permit, which could risk a closure even earlier than 2010, a state official said.

The landfill, which accepts construction and demolition debris, will be allowed to continue operating so that depressions can be filled in to help prevent stormwater from accumulating in the landfill.

The landfill contains 10 to 12 feet of water, which the state wants drawn down to less than a foot by the end of this year, according to the state health department.

The water in the landfill, combined with the sulphur-laced drywall dumped at the landfill, helped produce the toxic gas, KDHE spokesman Joe Blubaugh said.

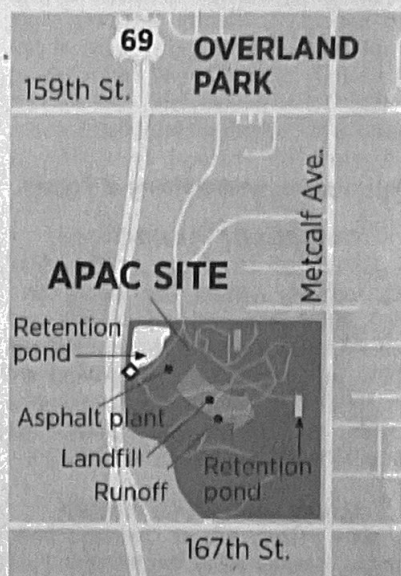
Blubaugh said the landfill operator has taken steps to measure and control the gas. But he noted that a key part of the permit calls for getting rid of the pooling water.

"The shale base of that landfill just doesn't allow water to escape," Blubaugh said. "So it becomes, in effect, like a swimming pool down in there."

Late last fall, environmental regulators hinted that they could not deny the permit, saying that they thought APAC had made progress in the last two years.

But since then, Blubaugh said, KDHE has learned more about the risks of long-term, low-level exposure to hydrogen sulfide.

The smell of rotten eggs be-



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gan bothering Overland Park neighbors in the summer of 2005, when heavy rain mixed with runoff from an on-site asphalt plant and percolated through the construction debris and released the gas.

Residents complained loudly, and state officials called in investigators to determine whether emissions had reached harmful levels in nearby neighborhoods.

Several months elapsed before the monitors were installed, while investigators concluded work in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Last October, the state completed its review of the company's request to expand the landfill from 50 acres to 82 acres. The company's original 1986 permit called for a 50-acre landfill, but it grew to 82 acres without a permit to expand.

The conditional permit allows waste to be disposed of on 82 acres because most of the land is covered in waste already, environmental regulators said.

Excavating waste from areas outside the initial 50 acres could result in more hydrogen sulfide being released, state officials said.

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