



2023 Analysis of Odor Complaints

King County’s Solid Waste Division (SWD) sometimes receives complaints regarding odor emitted from its facilities, and we take these complaints seriously.

Prevention is our most effective strategy. In the next few years, both the Houghton and Algona transfer stations will be replaced with modern recycling and transfer stations designed to provide significantly better odor control. At the Cedar Hills landfill, active areas are covered at the end of each working day to control odors and wind-blown litter and to reduce the potential for wildlife to get into and carry away garbage.

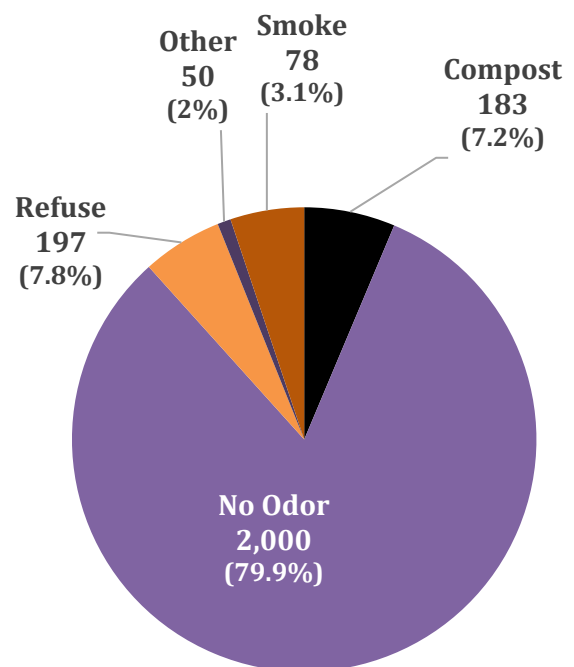
In 2023, SWD received 17 odor complaints through our customer service line, all of which were attributed to operations at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill; this was an increase from two complaints regarding Cedar Hills in 2022. There were no complaints regarding SWD’s nine closed landfills, two drop boxes, or eight transfer stations.

SWD is continually researching means by which landfill odor can be reduced. Since February 2022, SWD has deployed new equipment at the active face where refuse is being placed. Manufactured by Byers Scientific, the technology uses a vapor system that neutralizes odors. Based on the significant downturn in odor complaints in 2022, the system appears to be highly effective. However, as discussed below, in 2023 SWD experienced an increase in odor complaints.

Monitoring and investigation are ongoing. On weekdays, trained staff conduct odor checks five times per day across the landfill and a minimum of four times through surrounding neighborhoods. On weekends, odor checks are conducted across the landfill three times a day. Staff also monitor areas associated with previous odor complaints.

In 2023, SWD conducted over 2,500 neighborhood odor checks. In 2,000 instances (79.9 percent), no odors were detected. Odors were classified as *refuse*, *compost*, *smoke*, and *other*. Examples of “other” odors include sewage, odor from the contaminated stormwater pond, and chlorine. Where odors were detected, refuse accounted for 197 of the 508 detections-- about 40 percent.

Refuse odor was detected in about 8% of neighborhood odor checks

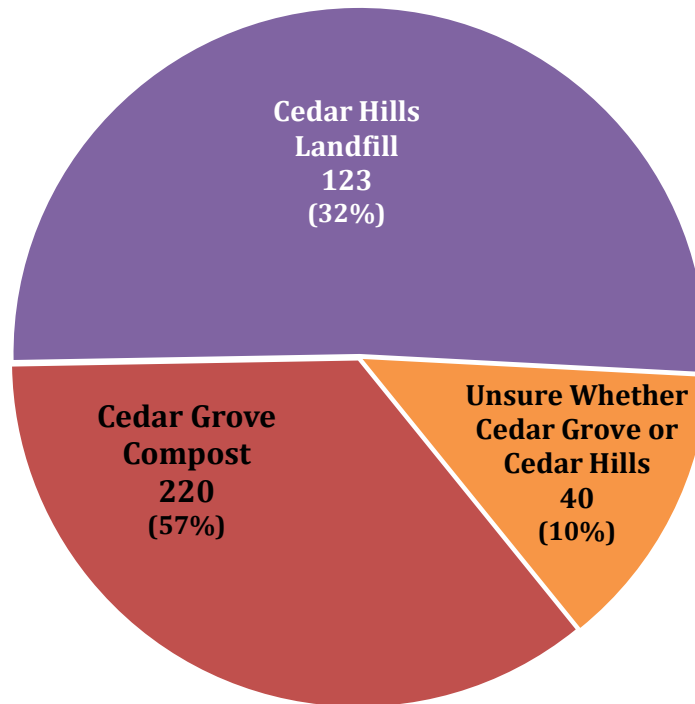


Solid Waste Division

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) has jurisdiction over King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, where they seek to protect public health, improve neighborhood air quality, and reduce our region’s contribution to climate change. PSCAA maintains records of odor complaints from across its jurisdiction but does not generally provide field investigations for complaints received.

In 2022, PSCAA received 383 odor complaints for the Maple Valley area of which 220 (57 percent) cited Cedar Grove Compost, 123 (32 percent) specified the landfill, and 40 (10 percent) were uncertain as to whether the source was the landfill or Cedar Grove.

32 percent of the odor complaints submitted to PSCAA in 2023 for the Maple Valley area were attributed to the Cedar Hills landfill. Landfill-related complaints increased by 77 from 2022



In 2023, there 77 more odor complaints than in the previous year, concentrated particularly in the fourth quarter, which accounted for more than 50 percent of the complaints filed in 2023. Landfill operators faced several challenges with keeping the edges of the active area sealed due to the need for re-grading. This meant that refuse that would normally be sealed was exposed, emitting odors. The seals were further undermined by heavy rainfall. Moreover, active filling has been occurring at progressively higher elevations as each lift, or layer of refuse, is added, which increases the potential for odor impacts on landfill neighbors. Another factor contributing to odor was associated with the installation of dual-phase wells, which enhance landfill gas collection and leachate removal. SWD operators were aware of these challenges and have worked to resolve them to minimize odors.

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Landfill operators expect to see incremental reduction in odor impacts. The next lift (Area 8, Lift 7) is expected to proceed with more successful sealing of the active area, and operators will employ best management practices for odor control, including placement of soil and hog fuel (which acts as a filter) and targeted use of the intelligent odor control system. SWD is also considering use of tarps for odor control during the rainy season.

As Stage 1 Closure of Area 8 begins in late spring or summer of 2024, the south slope will be under a liner and as closure continues, odor impact risks are expected to steadily decrease.

Anyone who notices odors or any other issue they feel is related to the landfill operations can call the Solid Waste Division at 206-477-4466 to get an immediate response. People should always call 911 first if they believe there is a potential emergency or a risk to safety, health, or property.