

Countryside Landfill caps odor problem, county says

March 20, 2009

by Courtney Flynn

Lake County officials this week announced the completion of an independent investigation into complaints of foul smells coming from the Countryside Landfill near Grayslake.

Waste Management Inc., the landfill operator, already has upgraded its system by installing several gas extraction wells to trap gases that should significantly reduce odors, according to the findings of the investigation.

In addition, the company is developing an "Odor Prevention and Response Plan" to document odor issues, investigate the source of odors and document remedies, officials said.

"I think they have worked very hard on this, and they understand the importance of dealing with the odor," said Walter Willis, executive director of the Solid Waste Agency of Lake County. "We want to keep the scrutiny and that pressure on."

The odor problems arose late last year when neighbors complained of foul smells coming from the facility. The Lake County Health Department, which regulates landfills, issued a violation to Waste Management in November.

County officials, the village of Grayslake and SWALCO leaders then hired Omaha-based HDR Inc., an environmental consulting firm, to launch an investigation that was completed this month. The cost was \$17,250, split among the three parties, Willis said.

In addition to installing the wells, Waste Management has agreed to try to avoid accepting certain construction debris, such as drywall, Willis said. That material interacts with bacteria at the landfill to create the "rotten egg" smell associated with hydrogen sulfide, he said.

The county's Health Department, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Illinois EPA's Bureau of Land and Bureau of Air will continue to monitor the landfill, officials said.

The Health Department has already increased inspections at the facility and is planning to buy a portable device to measure hydrogen sulfide concentrations, officials said.

Grayslake Mayor Tim Perry said he hasn't heard any complaints from residents about the landfill odor in recent months.

"Waste Management has been doing everything they can to stay on top of it," Perry said.