



# Update: Bishop Road Landfill Fire City of South Fulton, Georgia

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) created this fact sheet to: provide you the results of our review of the air samples taken from the landfill fire; answer your questions about the health effects of breathing smoke from the Bishop Road landfill fire; and provide steps you can take to help protect your health.

## The Bottom Line

- Most people should not have long term health problems caused by breathing smoke from this fire.
- In the short term, smelling the odors from the smoke may cause nausea and headaches, or irritate your throat and eyes. These symptoms should improve when leaving the fire area.
- In the short term, symptoms such as irritation of the nose and eyes and shortness of breath may worsen in people who have existing breathing problems or heart conditions after breathing smoke from the fire.



ATSDR staff checks air-monitoring equipment

## What did ATSDR do?

ATSDR collaborated with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to evaluate the results of air samples collected near the Bishop Road Landfill Fire to see if breathing smoke from the fire could affect people's health. The samples were tested for:

- Particulate matter (PM) – very small particles in the air
- Volatile and Semi-Volatile Organic Chemicals (VOCs) – chemicals that evaporate into the air easily
- Hydrogen Sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) – gas that smells like rotten eggs
- Carbon Monoxide (CO) – clear, odorless gas
- Metals

## What did ATSDR find?

ATSDR made the following conclusions based on samples collected from November 16 – 18, 2018:

- Most people will not experience any long term health effects from the smoke.
- Short term exposure may cause nausea and irritation of the nose, eyes, and throat. These symptoms should pass when the exposure to the smoke stops.
- Some people are more sensitive to breathing smoke or smelling odors. They may have the following problems:
  - » Coughing
  - » Nausea
  - » Trouble breathing normally
  - » Stinging eyes
  - » Scratchy throat
  - » Runny nose
  - » Irritated sinuses
  - » Wheezing and shortness of breath
  - » Chest pain
  - » Headaches
  - » An asthma attack
  - » Tiredness
  - » Fast heartbeat
- Most symptoms will improve after you quit breathing the smoke.



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## What steps can I take to reduce my exposure to smoke?

- Some people are more sensitive to breathing smoke or smelling odors, including children under 18 years of age and people over 65 years old. Stay indoors when you see or smell smoke, especially if you have respiratory problems such as asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), emphysema, or heart disease.
- Talk to your health care provider if you notice your respiratory or heart problems getting worse. Work with your doctor to manage your symptoms while the fire is burning. ATSDR can provide contacts for your doctor to consult with specialists familiar with health effects caused by exposure to chemicals and smoke.
- Reduce outdoor activities or do them more slowly, when possible, if you see or smell smoke or experience irritation or other problems described earlier.
- Close the doors and windows of your house to keep smoke from getting inside.
- Follow the recommendations of your local or state health department.



Smoke from landfill fire

## Next Steps

### ATSDR will:

- continue to evaluate air sample results when requested by EPA or EPD.
- answer environmental health questions for community members and health care providers.
- continue to work with EPD to address public health issues.

Contact EPD if you have general questions about the fire.

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## How can I find out more?

Contact ATSDR if you have health questions about the fire.

### **Leann Bing**

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ATSDR

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The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Atlanta, Georgia. Our mission is to protect communities from harmful health effects related to exposure to natural and man-made hazardous substances in the environment.