

COMMUNITY HYDROGEN SULFIDE GUIDANCE

This document gives guidance for South Bay residents and visitors about the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District's (SDAPCD's) measurements, in parts per billion (ppB), of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) from the Tijuana River at community sites. See below to learn about what to expect and recommended actions for each level range. Historical and hourly measurements are available on the [SDAPCD Tijuana River Valley website](#).

Measurement Levels and Recommended Actions

Monitor Reading (1-Hour Avg.)	What to Expect	Recommendations
Green Less than 5 ppB	Most people will not smell an odor or experience odor-related symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No recommendations.
Yellow Between 5 and 30 ppB	Some sensitive groups may smell an odor and experience odor-related symptoms such as headaches, nausea, or respiratory discomfort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit outdoor activities if you smell odor that is bothersome.
Orange More than 30 ppB	<p>Many people will smell an odor and/or experience odor-related symptoms.</p> <p>SDAPCD will issue an 'Odor Advisory' to inform the public.*</p> <p><i>For levels 200 ppB¹ or higher, SDAPCD will activate multiagency review to develop additional public recommendations if needed.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit outdoor activities if you smell odor that is bothersome. Keep doors and windows closed to prevent odor from coming indoors. Air out your home or building when odor is not present (by opening doors and windows, for example). If symptoms from strong odor persists, are worrisome, or worse, seek medical care.
Purple More than 27,000 ppB ²	<p>Many people could experience serious, lasting adverse health effects.</p> <p><i>First responders will evaluate for safety and potential shelter in place or evacuation order.*</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Await further instructions from First Responders, through Alert San Diego.

¹ [https://www.sdapcd.org/content/dam/sdapcd/documents/tjrv/Expanded H2S Threshold Guidance_11.12.24.pdf](https://www.sdapcd.org/content/dam/sdapcd/documents/tjrv/Expanded_H2S_Threshold_Guidance_11.12.24.pdf)

² <https://www.epa.gov/aegl/hydrogen-sulfide-results-aegl-program>

When would additional actions be recommended?

Several factors are considered when level(s) for ppB would be a concern. Factors include environmental changes, such as temperature, wind, humidity, and time of the year; available data/history of H₂S levels to review patterns in frequency, average, and duration; coordination with local/state/federal agencies to evaluate the increased levels and provide recommendations; and other factors to ensure the public receives accurate information. The public will be notified if additional action is needed.

Please note this guidance is subject to change and may be adjusted as needed.



For more information and updates, visit:
SDAPCD's Tijuana River Valley website
<https://www.sdapcd.org/content/sdapcd/about/tj-river-valley.html>



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is H2S?

H2S is a colorless gas that has a very strong odor (like “rotten egg”). H2S is measured in ppB, a way of measuring the amount of things in the air.

What if people experience more sensitivity to H2S?

The guidance levels on page 1 are recommendations. Since an individual may have a different sensitivity to H2S odor, the appropriate action(s) for each person may vary. Actions can be adjusted for individual needs. Seek medical care if symptoms persist, are worrisome, or worsen.

Can children be sent to schools?

SDAPCD and the County are in contact with affected school districts. School districts have been provided guidance to keep children safe and will engage the County and/or SDAPCD with any questions. Please follow the guidance and directions provided by the child’s school district. Additional resources are available on the [County’s school guidance webpage](#).

Can people continue outdoor activities?

Members of the public can check current and previous levels of H2S from the Tijuana River Valley to make informed decisions. The website offers recommended guidance and can be adjusted to suit a person’s individual needs and comfort.

Why is the odor stronger on some days than others?

Many reasons can cause the strength of the odor to change on a given day. Examples include the amount of flow of untreated sewage in the Tijuana River, how close a person is to the flow of untreated sewage, temperature, wind speed/direction, humidity, and other environmental factors.

How will information about each level be shared with the public?

*No notification will be sent for odor in the green and yellow zones. For levels in the orange zone, SDAPCD will post an ‘Odor Advisory’ on the [SDAPCD Tijuana River Valley website](#), through social media (@SDAPCD on [X](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#)), and [SDAPCD email subscription service](#). For purple zone, first responders will evaluate for safety and potential shelter in place or evacuation order. Sign up for [Alert San Diego](#) to receive immediate, emergency notifications. The public can also visit the SDAPCD website to view current and past levels of H2S from the Tijuana River Valley. The website also offers this guidance document in multiple languages.

Where can odor complaints be sent?

SDAPCD’s mobile app allows anyone to directly report air quality concerns, such as odors, dust, asbestos, smoke, and others. The mobile app is available for download at:

- [SDAPCD Air Quality Complaints on the Apple App Store](#)
- [SDAPCD Air Quality Complaints on Google Play](#)

Air quality concerns can also be reported by phone, at [\(858\) 586-2650](#), or email, at apcdcomp@sdapcd.org. For after-hours, please call [\(858\) 586-2650](#) and select option 2.

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