Maryland has a big landfill problem. If you’ve spent an afternoon at Monocacy National Battlefield, dropped your child off at Sandymount Elementary, or watched the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs hit a home run at Regency Stadium, you may have had your senses assaulted by one of Maryland’s 40 municipal landfills. But landfills are not just smelly. They’re also Maryland’s largest source of methane pollution — an extremely powerful greenhouse gas.

An Unexpected Driver of Global Warming

We knew that Maryland’s landfills were a big source of greenhouse gas emissions. We didn’t know just how bad the problem was—until a couple years ago, when the Environmental Integrity Project found that Maryland’s 40 municipal solid waste landfills are producing four times more methane and carbon dioxide than the state thought. The problem is so bad that landfills are now Maryland’s number one source of methane emissions—even more than the gas industry—and it’s not even close!

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that is more than 80 times more effective at heating the planet than CO2. Cutting short-lived climate pollutants like methane is an effective strategy to achieve significant greenhouse gas reductions in the near term.

A New Rule

Thankfully, the Maryland Department of Environment has released a draft new rule to rein in methane in Maryland. The rule will:

● Act on climate, reining in the powerful greenhouse gas methane by up to 50% in landfills
● Protect public health, cutting down on other toxic pollutants
● Make Maryland a leader on the East Coast on this long-overlooked issue

This regulation is long overdue. Only about half (21 of 40) of Maryland’s landfills currently operate any kind of gas collection or control systems, and only four of these must comply with any government standards to ensure that they work. The time to cut greenhouse gasses and slow the devastating effects of climate change is now!

Take Action

Sign our online petition: https://tinyurl.com/MDmethane

To get involved as a volunteer, contact Nat Reid at natallia@chesapeakeclimate.org
**The New Methane Regulation Will:**

**Act On Climate**

The General Assembly has set an ambitious goal of achieving 60% reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2031, and Maryland cannot achieve that goal without tackling methane from landfills.

MDE’s draft rule will require a greater number of Maryland landfills to operate gas control systems and, importantly, will establish more stringent requirements for the operation of those systems as well as monitoring and reporting of emissions data and other important information. MDE estimates that the draft rule will reduce greenhouse gases from the 32 affected landfills by 25-50% when fully implemented.

**Protect Public Health**

Methane contributes to the formation of ground-level ozone, a human health hazard and greenhouse gas in its own right. Breathing ozone can aggravate or even cause asthma and other lung diseases. Further, the landfill gas produced during the decomposition of organic materials also contains small amounts of other compounds, including a variety of toxic air pollutants, including benzene, toluene, and xylenes, that can cause cancer, respiratory issues, and other health problems.

Unless a landfill has controls in place, most of the gas seeps out of the landfill and escapes into the atmosphere.

**Make Maryland a Leader on the East Coast**

Over the past two years, the States of Oregon and Washington have passed landfill methane standards that are much stronger than the federal requirements set by the U.S. EPA. Oregon and Washington have built on the approach pioneered in California over a decade ago. It is time for Maryland to join these other states in assuming climate leadership on this important issue. And that is what Maryland is doing with this draft rule. With these new regulations, Maryland will be the first state on the East Coast to follow the stronger regulatory approach that has been taken in California, Oregon, and Washington so far. We’ll set an important precedent for our neighboring states.

**What’s Next**

Of course, the best way to reduce emissions from landfills is to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in the landfills. Food is the most prevalent type of waste in Maryland’s landfills, and it is the breakdown of this organic waste that produces methane in the first place. Maryland has not done enough to prevent food from entering its landfills. So we’re supporting efforts to divert organic waste away from landfills through composting and other programs.

In the meantime, this is an important first step. Stay tuned for more.

**Take Action**

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To get involved as a volunteer, contact Nat Reid at [natallia@chesapeakeclimate.org](mailto:natallia@chesapeakeclimate.org)
Works Cited


