



**BARBARA FERRER, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.Ed.**  
Director

**MUNTU DAVIS, M.D., M.P.H.**  
County Health Officer

**MEGAN McCLAIRE, M.S.P.H.**  
Acting Chief Deputy Director

313 North Figueroa Street, Room 806  
Los Angeles, California 90012  
TEL (213) 288-8117 • FAX (213) 975-1273

[www.publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov)

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**Hilda L. Solis**  
First District

**Mark Ridley-Thomas**  
Second District

**Sheila Kuehl**  
Third District

**Janice Hahn**  
Fourth District

**Kathryn Barger**  
Fifth District

July 16, 2020

Margaret Clark, Vice Chair  
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/  
Integrated Waste Management Task Force  
900 S. Fremont Avenue  
Alhambra, CA 91803-1331

Dear Ms. Clark:

Thank you for sharing your concerns regarding the potential health risk to the workers and communities surrounding the Sunshine Canyon Landfill. The Department of Public Health (Public Health) acknowledges these are difficult and uncertain times which have resulted in drastic changes to our daily lives and routines. Many people have suffered severe financial impacts, loss of family members and loved ones, and concerns over what the future holds. The issues you raise regarding municipal solid waste, potential health risks, and organic waste recycling are important public health concerns and we thank you for advocating for the health of your community.

During declared emergencies, solid waste facilities can request emergency waivers of the terms and conditions listed on the permit to better equip them to manage increased volumes in waste, however, the waiver cannot pose a threat to public health, safety or the environment. The Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) must grant or deny the waiver request within seven days of receipt. In this case, the Sunshine Canyon Landfill LEA consulted with the other regulatory agencies, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and the South Coast Air Quality Management District, prior to issuing the waiver.

While researchers continue to collect data, evidence does not currently suggest that people become sick with COVID-19 from exposure to trash, garbage, food waste, or other municipal solid waste. Like other respiratory illnesses, COVID-19 is most commonly spread by to others by respiratory droplets from an infected person. Although the virus can survive for a short period on some surfaces, it is unlikely to be spread through the solid waste disposal system. Standard practices associated with landfill operations should be sufficient to protect waste workers from COVID-19. These standard practices include engineering and administrative controls, hygiene precautions, specific safe work practices, and personal protective equipment normally required when handling waste. At this time, waste workers are not characterized as being at elevated risk and no additional COVID-19 special precautions are necessary.

Margaret Clark  
July 16, 2020  
Page 2

Organic waste in landfills are a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions contributing to global climate change. Senate Bill 1383 (Organic Waste Recycling) was an important step in reducing methane emissions and advancing Los Angeles County's sustainability efforts. Food waste that can be readily prevented, recycled, or composted, accounts for approximately 18 percent of total landfill disposal. Public Health has launched initiatives to divert edible food to food banks and pantries to help prevent organic food waste from going into landfills. Public Health is committed to working with the State departments to monitor the implementation of SB 1383 and inform on any resulting public health impacts.

Public Health extends our appreciation and gratitude to the Task Force for doing their part to protect public health, support waste workers and those in affected communities. If you have any questions, please contact Liza Frias at [lfrias@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:lfrias@ph.lacounty.gov) or at (626) 430-5374.

Sincerely,



Barbara Ferrer, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.Ed.  
Director

- c: California Department of Public Health (Dr. Sonia Y. Angell)
- California Environmental Protection Agency (Jared Blumenfeld)
- California Department of Food and Agriculture (Karen Ross)
- CalRecycle (Ken DaRosa, Mark de Bie, Matt Henigan)
- Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (Maria Masis, Tim Stapleton, Edgar De La Torre)
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Shikari Nakagawa-Ota, Maurice Pantoja, Dorcas Hanson-Lugo)
- Sunshine Canyon Landfill Local Enforcement Agency (Shikari Nakagawa-Ota, Dorcas Hanson-Lugo, David Thompson)
- Sunshine Canyon Landfill Technical Advisory Committee (Lisa Webber, Jon Sanabria)
- Sunshine Canyon Landfill Community Advisory Committee (Wayde Hunter)
- Each Member of the Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/ Integrated Waste Management Task Force
- Each Member of the Task Force Facility and Plan Review Subcommittee