



CITY OF HOLLISTER PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

1321 SOUTH STREET • HOLLISTER, CA 95023-3876

DWWTP ODOR – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Where is the odor coming from and why is it happening?

A: The odor — which smells like sulfur or “rotten eggs” — is coming from our Sludge Stabilization Basin (treatment ponds).

The smell developed after equipment issues at the facility created an operational disruption. Some aging equipment needed repairs, which affected how the system functions.

We are actively carrying out repairs and upgrades to correct the issue and restore normal operations.

Here is what happened:

1. The reclamation plant’s intake screens malfunctioned, allowing debris such as rags and grit to enter the system.
2. That debris damaged the aerators, which act as the “lungs” of the plant and pump oxygen into the water so helpful bacteria can break down waste.
3. With reduced oxygen levels, the water in the ponds became stagnant and began producing hydrogen sulfide gas — the source of the sulfur or “rotten egg” odor.

Repairs and equipment upgrades are underway, and these improvements will restore proper oxygen levels and eliminate the odor.

Q: When will the smell go away?

A: We expect a reduction in odors within 2 to 4 weeks. As we install the new aerators, you may notice the smell temporarily increase. This is normal and means we are stirring up the water to treat it. Please be patient as the system stabilizes.

Q. Are there certain times when odors are worse?

A: Odors can come from a variety of sources and in the City of Hollister, there are many possible points of origin: canneries, truck/car exhaust from nearby freeways, application of organic fertilizer, large composting facilities and of course the wastewater treatment plant and sewer collection system.

Weather conditions, such as warmer weather and wind direction, can make odors more noticeable. While odors are certainly a natural part of the wastewater treatment process, though the current intensity is temporary. The City is investing significant resources in repairing and upgrading the facility to control these emissions and minimize the impact on your neighborhood.

Q: Are there any health concerns associated with these odors? Are they toxic?

A: The odor most frequently associated with wastewater treatment is hydrogen sulfide, which is a naturally occurring byproduct of the wastewater treatment process. It is also generated by decaying organic material. However, the City Council has requested a full public health study to ensure public health compliance and provide peace of mind. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has published helpful information concerning hydrogen sulfide, which is available [here](#).

Your tap water is a separate system.

Q: How can I help protect our plant infrastructure to help avoid odors in the future?

A: Protect Our Plant. It Starts at Home. The recent operational constraints was accelerated by debris that clogged intake screens and damaged the aeration system. While we are installing new heavy-duty screens to improve our plant's defenses, we need your help to keep the pipes flowing:

- **Wipes Clog Pipes:** Never flush wipes, paper towels, or hygiene products. Even those labeled "flushable" do not break down like toilet paper; they twist into "ropes" that can damage pumps, aerators, and other critical equipment.
- **Stop the FOG:** Fats, Oils, and Grease harden in pipes like concrete, causing blockages that lead to backups and odors. Please cool your cooking grease and dispose of it appropriately, not the sink.

Q: Will the City be providing updates to the public on the status of repairs and odors?

A: Yes. We believe transparency is key to trust. We will share updates, information and progress on repairs on social media. To stay informed, please follow the city on Hollister, CA. The City also provides updates during its regularly scheduled City Council Meetings and invites residents to get updates on [Agendas & Minutes](#)

Q: Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions, please contact Public Works at 831-636-4370 or publicwork@hollister.ca.gov