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NEW HHS/ATSDR REPORT USES STALE DATA TO ASSESS AIR QUALITY ADJACENT TO BRISTOL QUARRY LANDFILL

Majority of the Mitigation Recommendations Already Implemented by City

BRISTOL, Va., December 22, 2025 – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) released a new report related to air quality in Bristol, Virginia and Bristol, Tennessee. The ATSDR report in its current state is flawed and misleading. It draws conclusions from four-year-old data collected before the remediation project began at the Bristol Quarry Landfill and does not accurately reflect the current level of emissions emanating from the landfill. The report also does not align with previous independent studies using mostly the exact same data, including one commissioned by neighboring Bristol, Tennessee.

ATSDR even acknowledged that its report is dated and suffers from major limitations including a minimal data set, limited sampling days, a poor coverage area, limited science on the chemicals being monitored to draw definitive conclusions, and an inability to determine exactly from where all the contaminants originated. ATSDR has also confirmed that the city has already fully implemented many of the remediation actions suggested in the report and that the health risks posed to the public by the landfill have been adequately addressed.

The agency will be scheduling a public meeting in Bristol in January, date and time are still to be determined, to discuss the findings of its report as well as the current state of the landfill's air quality with the community. The meeting will include representatives from ATSDR leadership, a medical doctor, and an epidemiologist to present the findings and provide additional context.

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) previously studied air quality in the area surrounding the Bristol Quarry Landfill in 2021, and again in 2022, and concluded that ongoing air monitoring is not necessary. Additionally, Laura Green, Ph.D., president and senior toxicologist for Green Toxicology LLC, was hired by Bristol, Tennessee to assess airborne emissions from the Bristol, Virginia landfill and found the levels within acceptable standards. These studies and reports have been publicly available for years.

A team from the University of Kentucky College of Public Health, led by Dr. Erin Haynes, also recently completed an Air Quality Study in Bristol, Virginia utilizing air sampling data collected from May 2024 through March 2025. The study results, which analyzed readings from outside 16 Bristol homes using the Ultrasonic Personal Air Sampler (UPAS), are being finalized and will be released in January 2026.

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Despite those reassuring air quality studies, Bristol, Virginia has conducted ongoing air monitoring and air sampling at the site since May 2023 to assuage any health concerns in the

community – publicly sharing test results on a website, www.bristolvalandfill.org, dedicated to transparency and informing the community about remediation efforts at the landfill. (Note: The city’s website has an explanation for the types of air data collected. Additionally, the city recently replaced its air monitoring equipment to provide greater sampling detail. As a result of the equipment conversion, data was not able to be reported during September, October and November 2025.) On weekdays, the operations manager for the city’s Solid Waste Department also conducts his own air monitoring analysis at the Scale House and the Public Works Building.

In developing its report, HHS/ATSDR had no interaction with the City of Bristol, Virginia and made no effort to access the more recent 28 months of available air monitoring data and independent reports from the site. The report also fails to assess or acknowledge the multiple actions the city has taken over the past four years to remediate issues at the landfill.

The city takes very seriously the health and safety of its citizens, employees, and neighbors, and has always been fully committed to monitoring benzene levels at the landfill due to the potential health hazards to the community. The HHS/ATSDR report suggests health risks date back 25 years and result from nearly constant exposure to elevated levels of benzene – none of which are remotely possible at the Bristol Landfill. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has also expressed concerns with the report and has issued a public press release related to the findings.

The city is willing to invest any amount necessary to protect our residents and surrounding community despite a threat to our financial stability. The city’s over 17,000 citizens have incurred \$38 million in costs to date for landfill enhancements and systems upgrades on remediation efforts to address odor issues. The city has a negative net position of \$82 million, noted in the 2025 audited financial statements, primarily related to landfill obligations.

The City of Bristol, Virginia has consistently met all conditions under a consent decree approved by the Virginia Attorney General’s Office and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Many of the recommendations outlined in the HHS/ATSDR report have already been embraced and implemented by the City of Bristol. They include:

- Monitoring of ambient air is conducted constantly and will continue into the future with results shared publicly.
- The landfill gas system is being enhanced with improved piping and well installations.
- The leachate control and collection system at the landfill is being upgraded.
- Weekly updates of all activities at the landfill are provided on the landfill website.
- Issues with the landfill liner where gases and vapors may be released have been addressed and repaired.
- The City of Bristol, Virginia consistently monitors odor complaints and communicates updates on remediation efforts with its regulators and the community.

Citizens concerned about health effects should contact ATSDR Region 3 Director Michael Byrns, PhD. You can reach out to him directly by phone at (404) 498-1681 or via email at ab79@cdc.gov.

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