



# ***The Msunduzi Municipality***

## **COMMUNICATIONS & IGR**

Telephone / uCingo: 033 3923085

- Facsimile/iFekisi: 0865156051

Private Bag / Isikhwama: X 321  
Pietermaritzburg/Pietermaritzburg 3201

---

Enq: Thobeka Mafumbatha Tel: (033)3923345 E-mail: Thobeka Mafumbatha@msunduzi.gov.za

---

### **MEDIA STATEMENT: LANDFILL SITE**

Subsurface fires are occasional incidents but can have severe repercussions for landfill operators and the surrounding community. These fires are especially dangerous as they can emit dangerous fumes from the combustion of the wide range of materials contained within the landfill. Msunduzi Municipality would like to apologise to the residents of the surrounding areas that have been affected by the smoke that has occurred as a result of fire at the Landfill site. The Municipality has deployed teams of Fire fighters from the Municipality, UMgungundlovu District and from Working on fire. Fire fighters started putting out the fire on Friday 4 October 2019. A meeting was held by the Municipality's Senior Management and Department of Environmental Affairs to come up with a sustainable plan for the site. The Municipality has deployed a Manager for the landfill site who will be dealing with all the operations and a plan for the sustainability of the area. We are in the process of hiring two bull dozers for the site.

Traffic will be monitoring both the North and South bound of the N3 for the smoke to ensure traffic safety. There is a 24-hour private security on site, which is guarding the area.

Key pollutants of concern are carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulphide, and

volatile organic compounds. Production of [dioxins](#) and [furans](#) is also a documented risk factor.

Subsurface spontaneous fires are considered the most dangerous and difficult to detect and extinguish among landfill fires. Whilst there is currently no monitoring at the landfill site itself, the Environmental Health unit does monitor ambient air as far as criteria pollutants are concerned.

Some of the pollutants monitored are-

Sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)

Carbon monoxide (CO)

Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>)

Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), and

Particulate Matter (PM)

The unit is currently in the process of accessing data from its network to view impacts of the landfill fire on the ambient air. There would most certainly be spikes in the normal data monitored, which could be attributed to the landfill fire.

The Environmental Health Unit has been inundated with complaints and calls from concerned people, and would like to advise as follows:

- If you do need to be in the area, or within close proximity, avoid areas where there is dense smoke or trapped smoke. Stay indoors and reduce physical activities, especially school with young children.
- People with heart or lung conditions, including asthma, children under the age of 14 years, pregnant women and generally (pensioners) people over the age of 65 years are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke.
- There is NO fixed advice as smoke affects your health depending on the type of waste that is burning, your age, existing medical conditions,

rate of activity and duration of exposure to the smoke.

- People with chronic lung and heart conditions **MUST** take their prescribed medications.
- Asthmatics should follow their personal action plan and keep reliever medications at hand.
- If it is hot and an air-conditioner is used, rather switch it to “recirculate” or “reuse air”. This limits the amount of smoke particles coming inside.
- If your home is uncomfortable, and it is safe to do so, consider taking a break away from the smoke, by visiting air-conditioned buildings etc.
- Pets are also affected during smoky conditions, and if practical to do so, keep them indoors, and consult a vet if you have further concerns.

Issued by Thobeka Mafumbatha

Msunduzi municipality Spokesperson

0823041456