
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 58 (Padilla) - Air quality: standard: hydrogen sulfide

Version: January 14, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: January 20, 2026

Policy Vote: E.Q. 7 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would require the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) to develop health-based threshold levels for hydrogen sulfide, among other things, and would require the air pollution control districts and air quality management districts to adopt, and would authorize local environmental and public health agencies to consider, any threshold level later developed by the office pursuant to the bill.

Fiscal Impact:

- OEHHA estimates ongoing annual costs of approximately \$423,000 (General Fund) for two positions and one-time funding of \$400,000 with \$150,000 ongoing (General Fund) in contracting costs. The staff and \$400,000 would support the technical development of thresholds for hydrogen sulfide, including the required public workshops, and consultation with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) on developing the response framework intended by the bill. The contract dollars would address technical support needs, including but not limited to work on health impacts of odors from hydrogen sulfide, and community engagement. OEHHA asserts that ongoing staff resources and the \$150,000 ongoing in contract dollars would be needed to maintain and update the hydrogen sulfide levels as appropriate and to enable OEHHA to develop thresholds, under Health and Safety Code 41514.7(c)(2), for other chemicals.
- CARB estimates ongoing costs of about \$1.1 million annually (Air Pollution Control Fund, General Fund, or other special fund) to consult with OEHHA and update or adopt hydrogen sulfide standards as recommended by OEHHA.

Background: Hydrogen sulfide, commonly associated with sewage, landfills, geothermal fields, and oil and natural gas extraction, is a toxic gas that produces a foul odor. Hydrogen sulfide is known to cause negative respiratory and neurological impacts at the acute exposure level, and while epidemiological information for chronic effects is limited, some studies suggest chronic exposure levels may be associated with ocular, cardiovascular, respiratory, and neurological impacts.

Hydrogen sulfide is regulated by CARB as a nuisance based on odor detection and the CAAQS for the chemical has been established at 30 parts per billion (ppb) averaged over one hour. OEHHA adopted this standard as the acute reference exposure level and established a chronic inhalation reference exposure level of 8 ppb (prolonged exposure greater than one year).³ A health-based standard for hydrogen sulfide would be established at a much higher level, as severe adverse health impacts are expected to occur at concentrations higher than 30 ppb.

As research progresses and new findings emerge, the air quality standards adopted by agencies adapt. NAAQS are reviewed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) at five-year intervals, and all have been updated within the last 15 years. For all CAAQS, the last review took place on December 2000 and was initiated by the Children's Environmental Health Protection Act (SB 25, Escutia, Chapter 731, Statutes of 1999). While the review (2000 Standards Review) led to updates for some standards, it ultimately concluded that the standard for hydrogen sulfide was reasonably health protective. The report further stated that the ambient levels of hydrogen sulfide are very low throughout most the state and the standard was considered a low priority for review since it was meant "to prevent odor annoyance and associated symptoms, outcomes that are clearly not as serious as those associated with [other] pollutants".

Proposed Law: This bill would:

- require, on or before January 1, 2030, OEHHA to develop health-based threshold levels for hydrogen sulfide.
- Further authorize OEHHA to develop threshold levels for additional air pollutants with the considerations specified for hydrogen sulfide upon an appropriation for this purpose from the Legislature.
- Require OEHHA to conduct at least 3 public workshops, including at least one located in the Tijuana River Valley region, at least one located in the Salton Sea region, and at least one selected in consultation with a community that has experienced significant hydrogen sulfide exposure.
- Require the air pollution control districts and air quality management districts to adopt, and would authorize local environmental and public health agencies to consider, any threshold level later developed by OEHHA pursuant to the bill. By imposing new duties on air pollution control districts and air quality management districts, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.
- Authorize the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to adopt additional or updated standards based on the threshold levels developed pursuant to the bill.
- Express the intent of the Legislature to develop guidelines that would require CARB, in consultation with specified entities, to develop a response framework to establish best practices and guidance based on OEHHA's development of thresholds established pursuant to the bill.

Related Legislation:

AB 1003 (Calderon, Chapter 537, Statutes of 2025) required a plan developed by CDPH with guidelines for significant air quality events to be completed by June 2027, and include public outreach and distribution of the plan.

AB 2851 (Bonta, Chapter 743, Statutes of 2025) required air districts to develop requirements for fence-line air quality monitoring and threshold levels for airborne contaminants associated with metal shredding facilities in consultation with OEHHA.

SB 867 (Allen, Chapter 83, Statutes of 2024) enacted the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 authorizing the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$10 billion to finance projects including, but not limited to drought, flood, and water resilience, coastal resilience, park creation, outdoor access, and clean air programs.

AB 619 (Calderon, Chapter 412, Statutes of 2021) required CDPH to develop a plan with recommendations and guidelines for counties to use in the case of significant air quality events caused by wildfires or other sources.

AB 1597 (Alvarez, 2023) would have authorized funds made available to the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) for North American Development Bank for loans, grants, and expenditures to address water quality problems arising in the California-Mexico cross-border watersheds. This bill was held on the suspense file in this committee.

AB 2248 (Eduardo Garcia, 2022) would have made \$100 million available from the General Fund to the State Water Board for grants and direct expenditures to address water quality problems arising in the California-Mexico cross-border rivers. This bill was vetoed by Governor Newsom.

SB 1301 (Hueso, Chapter 368, Statutes of 2020) required CalEPA and the California Natural Resources Agency to collaborate to create a Tijuana River Valley Watershed Action Plan to be reviewed and updated on a 3-year cycle.

SB 690 (Hueso, Chapter 381, Statutes of 2019) encouraged the State Coastal Conservancy to prioritize projects identified in feasibility studies conducted by the County of San Diego for the Tijuana River Valley when expending funds to address transboundary flows and pollution in the Tijuana River Valley.

AB 965 (Eduardo Garcia, Chapter 668, Statutes of 2015) established the New River Water Quality, Public Health, and River Parkway Development Program to coordinate funding and implementation for environmental and health projects and purposes relating to the California-Mexico border region.

AB 1095 (Eduardo Garcia, Chapter 722, Statutes of 2015) required the California Natural Resource Agency to submit a list of shovel-ready restoration projects for the Salton Sea to the Legislature by March 2016.

SB 277 (Ducheny, Chapter 611, Statutes of 2003) enacted the Salton Sea Restoration Act that established a fund for various purposes relating to restoration of the Salton Sea.

SB 25 (Escutia, Chapter 731, Statutes of 1999) required CARB to review all existing health-based ambient air quality standards to determine whether they adequately protect the health of the public, including infants and children, and to revise the highest priority air quality standard determined to be inadequate by December 2002.

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