

Date of Hearing: June 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

SB 58 (Padilla) – As Amended June 15, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: Air quality: standard: hydrogen sulfide

SUMMARY: Requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop a response framework to address fugitive and natural sources of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) The federal Clean Air Act (CAA) and its implementing regulations set National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants, designate air basins that do not achieve NAAQS as nonattainment, and require states with nonattainment areas to submit a State Implementation Plan (SIP) detailing how they will achieve compliance with NAAQS. (42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*)
- 2) Provides the ARB with primary responsibility for control of mobile source air pollution and provides that local air districts have primary responsibility for controlling air pollution from all sources, other than emissions from mobile sources, and establishes certain powers, duties, and requirements for those districts. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 39500 *et seq.* and 40000 *et seq.*)
- 3) Requires, subject to the powers and duties of the ARB, air districts to adopt and enforce rules and regulations to achieve and maintain the state and federal air quality standards in all areas affected by emission sources under their jurisdiction, and to enforce all applicable provisions of state and federal law. (HSC 40001)
- 4) Prohibits any person from discharging from any source quantities of air contaminants or other material that cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public, or that endanger the comfort, repose, health, or safety of any of those persons or the public. (HSC 41700)
- 5) Establishes the Air Toxics “Hot Spots” Information and Assessment Act of 1987 to, among other things, require a health risk assessment to be submitted to the air districts that evaluates and predicts the dispersion of hazardous substances in the environment and the potential for exposure of human populations, and to assess and quantify both the individual and population wide health risks associated with those levels of exposure. (HSC 44300 *et seq.*)
- 6) Requires the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) to adopt health-based exposure standards, known as Reference Exposure Levels (RELs), for toxic air contaminants, including H₂S. (HSC 44360)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Requires ARB, in consultation with the local air districts, the Office of Emergency Services, the State Department of Public Health, regional water quality control boards or other local or regional authorities, local environmental and public health agencies, universities and academic institutions, affected tribal governments, and community-based organizations, to develop a response framework that establishes best practices and guidance for addressing fugitive and natural sources of H₂S gas and for community preparation and response to H₂S exposure events originating from these sources.
- 2) Requires ARB to consider cross-media releases, and develop integrated, multiagency approaches to identify and address fugitive and natural sources, and methods for reducing identified fugitive and natural sources of H₂S gas in impacted communities.
- 3) Requires ARB to consider and evaluate the inadequacies of the Acute, 8-hour, and Chronic Reference Exposure Levels for fugitive and natural sources of emissions for developing the response plan. Requires the evaluation to consider the following:
 - a) Current scientific literature regarding acute, subchronic, and chronic health effects of H₂S exposure, including the impact of chronic low-level exposure.
 - b) The adequacy of current averaging times for characterizing hazardous exposure, including the frequency and duration of possible exposures.
 - c) The influence of local and regional climates, outdoor, and indoor settings on exposure.
- 4) Requires ARB to conduct at least three public workshops located in the following:
 - a) At least one in the Tijuana River Valley region.
 - b) At least one in the Salton Sea region.
 - c) At least one selected in consultation with a community that has experienced significant H₂S exposure.
- 5) Establishes the following definitions:
 - a) “Fugitive source” means any source of emissions of H₂S gas that is not currently regulated as a stationary source by a local air district.
 - b) “Local environmental and public health agencies” means any local entity that a health officer serves, or any local environmental health agency.
 - c) “Natural source” means a source of H₂S occurring in nature as a result of environmental circumstances.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Background.** Hydrogen sulfide is a colorless, flammable, poisonous gas with a rotten egg odor. It burns in air with a pale blue flame. Hydrogen sulfide is emitted during the burning of sulfur-containing fuel oil and coal and wherever organic matter undergoes putrefaction. It is also emitted from a variety of industrial sources, including paper plants, leather tanning, production of heavy water for nuclear reactors, and manufacture of chemicals and metals. The primary stationary sources that have reported emissions of hydrogen sulfide in California are electrical service companies, oil and gas extraction operations, and steam and air conditioning supply services. Hydrogen sulfide also occurs in coal pits, volcanic gases, natural gas wells, sulfur springs, and in decaying organic matter containing sulfur. 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 as a nuisance based on odor detection, with an air quality standard of 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).

Unlike the emissions from entities that ARB and local air districts regulate, there have been incidents of air emissions across the state that do not have a clear responsible party, but may far exceed established standards and have significant impacts on neighboring communities. The two situations highlighted by this bill are examples of these “orphan incidents.”

Near the California-Mexico border, raw sewage from Tijuana crosses into San Diego County polluting the Tijuana River Valley with industrial chemicals, pesticides, and trash. As this transboundary pollution meanders through the valley, it generates hydrogen sulfide emissions and local scientists and communities have raised alarms about a particular emission site on Saturn Blvd, infamously known as the “hot spot.” A constricted culvert under Saturn Blvd accelerates the untreated wastewater, generating turbulence and emitting hydrogen sulfide. When the wastewater is not diverted in Mexico, hydrogen sulfide has been detected at 2100 ppb (1-hour average), which is 70 times the nuisance standard, and frequently spikes depending on the flow rate of the sewage. Local scientists have demonstrated that averaging the hydrogen sulfide data over 1 hour to compare to the 30 ppb standard does not capture exceedances that occur within minutes and are suspected to have negative public health implications. The community has called for standards that consider different averaging times to capture these spikes and subsequent public notice and response.

Located in Riverside and Imperial counties, the Salton Sea tends to be a major source of hydrogen sulfide emissions due to a large influx of nutrients through agricultural runoff and the declining water levels, which increase the sea’s ability to mix. With summer conditions, monitoring efforts have shown that hydrogen sulfide frequently exceeds the 30 ppb standard, for hundreds of hours over the course of the season. The humid climate of the region anecdotally exacerbates health effects and the current standard does not take humidity into account. These emissions impact communities already overburdened and suffering respiratory impacts from other emissions originating from the progressively declining Salton Sea, such as aerosolized seawater containing toxins and particulate matter released from the exposed seabed.

2) Author's statement:

SB 58 advances equity by improving the state's understanding of hydrogen sulfide exposure in disproportionately burdened communities, including the Tijuana River Valley and Salton Sea regions. These communities, often low-income, immigrant, Latino, and Tribal, experience repeated or prolonged exposure alongside other environmental and health stressors.

SB58 requires a more comprehensive evaluation of hydrogen sulfide exposure, including acute and chronic impacts and vulnerable populations, to improve identification of gaps and inform state responses. It seeks to strengthen understanding of community-level health risks and improve coordination among agencies responding to hydrogen sulfide events in the Tijuana River Valley and Salton Sea.

The bill seeks to improve the state's capacity to address environmental health disparities affecting vulnerable communities.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

A Voice for Choice Advocacy
Climate Reality Project San Fernando Valley Chapter
Climate Reality Project, Los Angeles Chapter
County of San Diego
League of Women Voters of California
Sierra Club

Opposition

California Manufacturers and Technology Association

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