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New Law Requires Calif. Landfills to Capture Methane

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A new regulation adopted today will force more than a dozen California landfills to install equipment that captures methane gas created by decomposing solid waste.

The [California Air Resources Board](#)'s newly adopted measure will also impact other landfills by forcing them to change their operating practices to reduce the amount of methane released into the atmosphere.

"Fixing the leaks in existing landfill gas collection systems is a fast way to cut the methane that is directly harming the earth's atmosphere," ARB Chairman Mary Nichols said in a prepared statement. "Even better, we will see an immediate health benefit, because methane is a precursor to smog."

All told, the regulation is expected to avoid 1.5 million metric tons of greenhouse gases. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is 23 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, the most prevalent gas, according to the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#).

In recent years, however, the waste management and dairy industries in the state and beyond have begun turning methane gas produced by their operations into a revenue stream by converting it to electricity or destroying it to generate carbon offsets.

ARB estimates the regulations will impact 218 of the state's 367 solid waste landfills. Fourteen are uncontrolled landfills that must design and install the equipment by 2012. Others with controls may be required to reduce methane emissions by changing their operating practices.

The move is an early action measure adopted under the [Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006](#), which aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent by 2020. Other early adoption measures include the [Low Carbon Fuel Standard](#), which will cut fuel carbon content by 10 percent by 2020, and [phasing out several fluorinated gases](#) used in semiconductor operations.