

Operations and Maintenance
Infoshare Group
Report to BACWA Board

Committee Meeting on: 05/26/2021
Executive Board Meeting Date: 06/18/2021
Committee Chairs: Kevin Dickison and Joaquin Gonzales

Committee Request for Board Action: None

11 attendees representing 10 member agencies, plus 2 guests from BACWA AIR committee

Round Table Discussion – Methane Management

Agencies discussed best management practices (BMPs) for methane, facilitated by the AIR committee consultant support team of Sarah Deslauriers and Courtney Mizutani. The purpose of the discussion was to assist the AIR committee in reviewing a survey of methane best management practices. Survey responses will support Bay Area Air Quality Management District's development of climate pollutant BMPs and/or permit requirements under Regulation 13.

Agencies provided the following input on methane management and related air quality issues:

- There is a lot of variability among agencies in the way that air permits are structured regarding digester gas, and the limiting factors vary between permits. For example, some agencies are limited by a BTU limit, others are limiting by flaring, and in some cases H₂S limits are the controlling factor. The permit limits directly affect how much food waste can be accepted for processing. The committee discussed the importance of BAAQMD raising permit limits to facilitate implementation of SB1383.
- Agencies reported that visual observations of PRVs and audible alarms on PRVs are important components of methane control. (The PRVs rarely activate, however – for some agencies this is a once-in-a-decade event. Preventative maintenance of digester gas systems (piping, PRVs, flow meters, etc.) is a focus area of all agencies.
- One agency reported that a FOG receiving station has been constructed, but is sitting dormant while air permits are finalized.
- Some agencies blend natural gas with digester gas, so in some cases methane management may include a mixture of digester gas and natural gas.
- Agencies reported using Draeger tubes for H₂S monitoring. No agencies reported using online realtime monitoring of H₂S.
- Several agencies reporting having older candlestick flares without emissions controls, which are allowed to be permitted as existing equipment. The flares can be maintained, but could not be permitted as new sources.
- Several agencies reported problems with siloxane harming cogeneration equipment.
- Agencies reported having extensive SOPs for digester cleaning and maintenance, which is typically performed on one digester at a time (all plants have more than one digester). Currently, BAAQMD rule development is focused only on routine operations, not digester cleaning.
- The survey will be modified to ask about whether dewatering equipment is in an enclosed space with emissions controls, or not. Some plants have this, others don't.
- Several agencies have facultative ponds (Sunnyvale, DSRSD). In Sunnyvale's case these ponds are highly valued by the community because of the habitat/aesthetic value.

Ideas for future meetings

Representatives from Sunnyvale and DSRSD agreed to facilitate a discussion regarding procedures for changing SCADA control screens used for operations

Next Meeting: Tentatively Wednesday, August 25th, 2021, virtual meeting format.
The committee will not return to in-person until at least the 4th quarter of 2021.