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Jefferson ethanol plant has unplanned waste discharge

GEORGE HESSELBERG
608-252-6140
ghesselberg@madison.com

An open valve led to an unplanned discharge of waste at an ethanol plant along Highway 26 outside of Jefferson last week, resulting in another invasion of nasty smells in the neighborhood, residents and officials confirmed Thursday.

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"The operators were unaware that a valve was open to the bleed line we were using," said plant manager Todd Foerster, in a letter to Department of Natural Resources officials. He referred to the incident in passing in a response to a routine scheduling request on another matter involving a waste discharge permit.

"The bad news is that we overloaded the system and discharged into the lagoon," Foerster wrote.

LINKS

- [Big Ethanol Plant, Big Stink \(June 8\)](#)

The lagoons at the plant were the source of a permeating stench released last spring when waste was channeled to them. The odor made residents unable to use the area around there for weeks. Company officials acknowledged the mistakes and set in motion a series of changes to handle the discharge and the release of odors from the lagoons.

In the note to the DNR, Foerster said "we think it is under control." He added that "preventative measures have been put in place to eliminate the possibility of recurrence."

Area resident Janet Bartz reported Wednesday "the odor was bad last night. My neighbor awoke with an asthma attack at 3 a.m. and at 6 a.m. I was unable to catch my breath while outside."

Danell Behrens, another resident, said that "every time they have one of these 'accidents' and/or they dump stuff into the lagoons, I and my neighbors have horrid breathing problems. Something has to be done. How much damage is this doing to everyone?"

DNR air quality expert Dave Carper said, "I will be speaking to them about potentially permanently isolating the appropriate piping to prevent these types of accidental releases, if that can happen without creating operational problems."