



a world class African city

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**MEDIA RELEASE
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City of Johannesburg provides update on sulphur-like odour complaints

The City of Johannesburg's Environment & Infrastructure Services Department (EISD) provides feedback following numerous complaints received regarding a strong sulphur-like odour experienced across various parts of the city. These complaints, which were widely reported in both mainstream media and on social media platforms, were formally brought to the attention of the Department on 16 January 2026.

Residents in areas including Sandton, Randburg, Roodepoort, Fourways, and Parktown reported experiencing a strong, pungent smell initially believed to be sulphur related. The extent of the reports prompted the City to initiate an investigation.

The City of Johannesburg operates a network of six ambient air quality monitoring stations that measure particulate matter (PM), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), and ozone (O₃). The odour described by residents as a "rotten egg" smell is more commonly associated with hydrogen sulphide (H₂S). Following receipt of the complaints, EISD officials conducted field surveys across the affected areas. These investigations confirmed that the odour was widespread and not confined to a single location, thereby ruling out a localised source within the City.

Given the geographical spread of the complaints and prevailing meteorological conditions, it is likely that the City was impacted by a transboundary pollution source. Current weather patterns are conducive to the long-range transport of air pollutants from the Highveld Priority Area and industrial complexes in Mpumalanga Province, which include power generation and petrochemical operations. The characteristics of the reported odour are consistent with emissions typically associated with such activities.

Over the past five years, the City has observed similar sulphur-related odour episodes occurring intermittently, particularly between January and March, when atmospheric conditions favour long-range pollutant transport. In response, the City has invested in hydrogen sulphide monitoring instruments, which are currently deployed at the Buccleuch and Alexandra air quality monitoring stations to monitor elevated H₂S levels.

It is important to note that the City of Johannesburg does not host major heavy industrial activities. All listed industrial operations within the City are licensed and

routinely monitored by the Environmental Management Inspectorate to ensure compliance with environmental legislation.

As a precautionary measure, communities are advised to remain indoors during periods of strong sulphur-like odours and to avoid strenuous outdoor activities.

Vulnerable groups, including the elderly and children, should be closely monitored for symptoms such as eye and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness, and fatigue. Prolonged exposure may result in more serious health effects, including respiratory complications and potential neurological impacts.

The EISD Air Quality Management Unit will continue to work collaboratively with other spheres of government to track and identify the source of the odour. Complaints will be closely monitored over the coming days as weather conditions improve and the dispersion of pollutants is expected to increase.

ENDS

Issued by the City of Johannesburg

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