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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Bucket Brigade Strikes Again: First Independent Air Sample Near Arvin Confirms Health Threats**

*Toxic Gas Suspected of Killing Compost Facility Workers Found Offsite Exceeding State Health Standards*

Arvin, CA--The first Arvin Bucket Brigade air sample has confirmed community concerns about the dangers of a troubled recycling and composting facility. The test showed health threatening levels of hydrogen sulfide, a toxic chemical at the center of an investigation of two worker deaths at the Community Recycling and Resource Center.

"Even though the facility was fined and their permit was revoked, they continue to operate and the sample shows unacceptable levels of toxic gas blowing toward Arvin and on public roads," said Sal Partida of Committee For A Better Arvin. " We are concerned that toxic air pollution is contributing to Arvin's problems of our children's poor health and learning capabilities."

The air sample was taken at directly downwind of Community Recycling near the facility's main gate during a toxic tour when noxious odors were observed on December 8, 2011. The Committee for a Better Arvin was hosting a toxic tour of the community which included Global Community Monitor (GCM), a Bay Area based organization that is training Arvin residents to take their own air samples, Center on Race Poverty and the Environment (CRPE) and members of the media.

In October of 2011, two workers died from lethal concentrations of hydrogen sulfide at the Community Recycling Center near Arvin. In November, the Kern County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to fine Community Recycling & Resource Recovery Inc. at least \$2.33

million for land use and related violations at its Lamont composting facility and revoked their permit.

"The sample confirms the County's decision was correct and we trust they will follow through and permanently close this irresponsible facility," said Gustavo Aguirre of CRPE. "The same company should also not be allowed to open another dangerous operation in Arvin to allegedly recycle pesticide contaminated plastics."

The sample detected 21 micrograms per cubic meter of hydrogen sulfide which is more than twice the State of California ambient air quality standard for hydrogen sulfide of 10 mg/m<sup>3</sup> over an annual period. According to environmental health expert working with GCM, Dr. Mark Chernaik, "the hydrogen sulfide level of 21 ug/m<sup>3</sup> would cause an odor that would be offensive to most people. If this level reflects hydrogen sulfide levels that generally prevail at this location, then chronic exposures would be associated with the health effects such as irritation of the eye and nose, cough, breathlessness, nausea, headache, and mental symptoms, including depression.[1]

Also in 1994, health experts published a scholarly study showing that children exposed to annual average hydrogen sulfide levels of only 6 ppb, but to daily maximum hydrogen sulfide levels of up to 70 ppb, suffered excessively from irritation of the nose, cough, and headache compared to children in a non-polluted community.[2] These health experts concluded that: "The results suggest that exposure to malodorous sulfur compounds may affect the health of children."

[1] Haahtela T, et al. (April 1992) "The South Karelia Air Pollution Study: acute health effects of malodorous

sulfur air pollutants released by a pulp mill." Am Journal of Public Health. 82(4):603-5.

[2] Marttila, O., et al. (August 1994) "The South Karelia Air Pollution Study: the effects of malodorous sulfur compounds from pulp mills on respiratory and other symptoms in children." Environ Res., 66(2):152-9.