



## COMPANY POSITION STATEMENT

March 2017

Many residents living in the Shongweni, Hillcrest and surrounding communities will be aware of an odour problem in the area. As one of the largest businesses in Shongweni, we'd like to apologise to you for our contribution to this problem. We'd also like to give you more information about what the smell is, where it is coming from and what we're doing to correct it.

### Who is EnviroServ and what do we do?

For nearly 40 years EnviroServ has been a leader in the South African waste management industry. The company handles the transport and long-term disposal of waste safely and effectively throughout the country. We provide an essential service to the business community by disposing of hazardous materials without polluting the environment. Without the services we provide, many business would simply be unable to operate.

EnviroServ operates under licence from the DEA and has always complied with prevailing regulations.

### When did the complaints start?

We first became aware of odour complaints from the community surrounding our Shongweni site in April 2016. This was the first time we had recorded a concentration of complaints since we first started operating there.

We started talking to the community immediately and a town hall meeting was held where a Working Group (including members of the community), was set up and tasked to conduct a joint fact finding mission. We also set up a dedicated complaints line where people could report odour events via a website or SMS. In August, the Working Group was dissolved and a further two Monitoring Committee meetings with community representatives were held before year end.

### How have we intervened?

In late August, EnviroServ committed to a number of interventions as agreed with the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). In consultation with them, we implemented a comprehensive programme at the site in an effort to reduce any contribution to the odour.

In October, the DEA issued a compliance notice. This is an administrative remedy which assists in enforcement of environmental laws, and it stemmed from community odour complaints from Shongweni.



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**Reg No 2008/021152/07**

It's important to note that although EnviroServ has been the focus of community complaints, the DEA itself has acknowledged there is more than one source of odour in the area and our analysis of complaints by a professional services company supports this.

### **So what's the problem, then?**

Because we'd never experienced concentrated odour complaints until April last year, we have spent a great deal of time trying to get to the bottom of the problem. After months of investigations, we concluded that the odour was caused by the change in pH of the landfill. This in turn was because of the change in Waste Regulations put in place by the DEA, with which we have to comply.

In short, the odour coming from our site is hydrogen sulfide gas. The good news is that because of interventions we've now put in place, the average emissions leaving the site are dropping. This has been confirmed by tests done by independent experts as well as our own real-time air monitoring. Continued treatment of incoming waste to higher pH levels will help to further capture and contain a significant percentage of the gas.

Fortunately, the DEA, in their compliance notice, also instructed us to revert to treating waste to the previous requirements. As a result, pH levels have shown a marked improvement. They will continue to improve by using this well-proven methodology that was in place before the change in regulations, and during which time there were virtually no complaints. Together with other measures we've put in place, and in which we've invested millions of rands, the site is showing significant improvement.

### **Is the waste we are treating toxic, and are we accepting imported waste?**

No, and no. The waste is hazardous, not toxic. That's an important distinction. Nor are we accepting imported waste. Our trucks being seen coming from the harbour are in fact just collecting general and industrial waste from the ships.

### **Has the odour ever been proved to be dangerous?**

For over 15 years, we've had comprehensive occupational health surveillance programmes in place for all our employees at Shongweni. No employee has ever been found to suffer from any occupational disease as a result of working at the Shongweni Landfill site.

Since April last year, we've had teams of scientists employed to investigate the odour. They have concluded – to the best of their knowledge - that while unpleasant, the odour is not at a



concentration which is in any way harmful to humans or animals. Previous independent air quality studies conducted in the area have also not indicated any health impacts.

### **How can we be sure?**

We want to be really sure, and we want you to be really sure too. That's why an independent toxicologist is currently conducting a health risk assessment and an environmental management company is undertaking a technical assessment of our Shongweni site which will be finalised in April.

We know the smell has been unpleasant for residents in the surrounding communities. For that we apologise. Please be assured that we're doing everything we practically can, well beyond what we've been asked to do, to try and fix the problem. We really do care about our stakeholders and are doing everything in our power to be a good neighbour – it is in our interests to work with the community to find a solution.

