

STENCH: No specific date by which company has to repair air cleaning device

Continued from 1A

Svelund said the issue arose after a winter fire damaged the facility's scrubber, which is a device that uses water or oil to absorb pollutants and allow a less concentrated smell to leave the factory.

In addition to Stanfield, 3D IdaPro operates factories in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin and Burley, Idaho.

Mark Johnson, the company's vice president of operations, said as far as he knew no complaints had been made directly to the company — but they had been contacted by DEQ and Stanfield's city manager.

"Basically, it's part of a raw material strain we bring in," Johnson said of the cause of the smell. "There was a fire and it burned down our air cleaning equipment. We put up a new scrubber as quickly as possible, but the new one is undersized. We're currently working with our environmental engineering firm and DEQ, who will help us design a scrubber system that's the proper size."

Johnson said he has only been with the company for two months, and that the company had been operating in Stanfield for less than a year. He said about 50 people are employed at the Stanfield factory.

Svelund said there is no specific date by which the company has to repair its air cleaning device.

"It will be an ongoing process," he said. "It could be something other than the scrubber. There's no firm deadline."

Despite the quick response, some residents are concerned about the history of the company, and the problems they have had in other states.

Residents of Wisconsin Rapids complained in late 2016 about a smell many likened to "bad cheese" coming from one of IdaPro's factories, but by April 2017 it was reported to have disappeared.

But in 2016, the company faced some criminal charges. According to southern Idaho newspaper the *Magic Valley Times-News*, the company



Odors wafting from the 3D IdaPro Solutions plant prompted some Stanfield residents to report the company to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

was charged with two misdemeanor counts of failure to conform to permitted use requirements and two counts of non-permitted use. The company pleaded not guilty on all counts.

Winebarger said many people with businesses downtown have complained that they can't eat lunch outside or display goods out on the sidewalk.

He said people have been making calls to DEQ since the beginning of this year, but so far had not seen any changes.

"First, they blamed the fire," he said. "Then they started blaming the product, said they're going to make the stacks higher, put in misters."

Winebarger said the smell is worse when the wind is blowing toward town, or when trucks drive through the area — including through West Coe Avenue, where Stanfield's library and popular restaurant the Broken Barrel are located.

Winebarger and Baker both noted that they don't object to the business being in town.

"The people from Stanfield don't want to see anybody lose their jobs," Baker said. "It's about the horrible smell it's creating. We want to have businesses. But people don't even want to sell their homes here (with the smell)."

Winebarger said he was concerned that the city of Stanfield didn't do enough research before allowing the business to open in town.

"Nobody voted on this," he said. "I think if they had taken five minutes and looked up (the company's) past, they would have said 'no.' Everybody wants the business, but when it chases everything else away, you can't."

Stanfield's city manager Blair Larsen said the plant had been in Stanfield for many years, but ownership has changed a few times.

Larsen said late last summer the factory was purchased by the current owner, 3D IdaPro Solutions. He said he had a "very positive" meeting with the company, who said they would be creating full-time jobs in the area.

"At the time, there was no discussion of the odor except that they said there would be a 'baked potato' smell in the air," Larsen said.

Larsen said the city was happy to welcome a company that brought jobs to the community, and that they had all their permits in order — including permits to build additions onto the facility.

"They put a big investment into the property and began operating in the winter," Larsen said.

Larsen said he didn't notice any objectionable smell until February, after the company had its first reported fire.

Larsen said the city had been working with the company and is well aware of the complaints from community members.

"This whole time, we've been trying to balance property rights with the needs of citizens," he said.

Winebarger said he was frustrated that the plant

continues to operate when the problem had not been fixed.

"I don't understand why someone doesn't say, 'If the smell doesn't get better, you've got to shut down until it is,'" he said.

But Larsen said shutting down the facility, even temporarily would be a major hit to the company's operations.

"In order to rectify (the situation), they need to have income from it," he said. "For that the company needs to keep open. If they shut down the smell stops, but then they don't have the money to open it up again. That's not a position I want to be in."

Larsen said he was not aware of lawsuits against the company when they first opened up in Stanfield, and only learned about them in March of this year. But even so, he said he didn't feel the company's status in other states necessarily affected its operations here.

"It's important for us that's

If you smell something, say something

Stanfield isn't the only city where residents complain about odors becoming a nuisance.

The city of Hermiston on Friday posted a message to Facebook encouraging its residents to make complaints to the city about foul odors emanating from properties in the city limits that may be in violation of the city's nuisance code.

"That means you don't have to live with it, you can actually do something about it!" a Facebook post from the city said.

During a May 22 city council meeting several citizens who live on the southwest side of Hermiston off of Highway 207 complained about the smell from a property owner's wet silage nearby. They were told the city must give due process to violators of its nuisance ordinances and were encouraged to document the problem and submit it to the city so that it can be used as evidence in court.

Residents with complaints about smell nuisances are encouraged to contact code enforcement officer Mike Marcum at mmarcum@hermiston.or.us or by phone at 541-667-5030 and submit details about where and when the problem occurred.

a suit that's been filed, but nothing has been proved," he said. "We can't take action against a company based on a suit that's been filed in another place."

Efforts to speak with a local representative of the company were unsuccessful, despite a trip to the factory.

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4534

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