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Home » News » Environment » Cause 'unknown' of landslide at Ontario County Landfill; no waste escaped facility, Casella says

# Cause 'unknown' of landslide at Ontario County Landfill; no waste escaped facility, Casella says

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Casella Waste Systems Inc. has made "significant progress in moving soil over the weekend" at the Ontario County Landfill after a two-foot-thick layer of soil slid down the facility's southwest face Wednesday afternoon, a company official said Sunday.



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## ONTARIO COUNTY, NY LANDFILL



### NOVEMBER 15 VENEER SOIL MOVEMENT

On Wednesday, November 15 the Ontario County Landfill experienced a veneer soil movement on one of its exterior soil slopes during a capping and closure project. This resulted in a two-foot thick layer of soil moving on top of the cap membrane down the slope to the perimeter road. There were no injuries or equipment damage from the event, no impacts to waste materials, and the soil remained entirely within the extent of the facility's perimeter road. There were no impacts to any onsite buffer areas or adjoining properties. Casella will continue to work with Ontario County leadership and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation to investigate the cause of the issue and continue to ensure that there is no risk to human health or the environment.

The landslide affected about three-and-half acres of a new seven-acre permanent cap that was being installed by contractors hired by Casella, County Administrator Chris DeBolt said in a [press release](#). DeBolt said no one was injured, and the displaced "clean construction material" fell within the waste area of the county-owned landfill.

A subsidiary of the Vermont-based company operates the 389-acre facility located about five miles west of the Town of Geneva. It is the state's third largest municipal waste landfill.

"There continues to be no impact to the surrounding environment and no injuries due to the incident," Jeff Weld, Casella's director of communications, said Sunday.

The company called the landslide "a veneer soil movement ... on the cap membrane."



**Casella operates the Ontario County Landfill under a contract with the county, but it sometimes hires third-party contractors to complete construction work.**

DeBolt told the Finger Lakes Times that the moving soil damaged some landfill gas collection equipment. "Because of this," he said, "there is the potential for increased landfill gas odors in areas surrounding the landfill."

The incident occurred within a few days of the one-year anniversary of the state's announcement of a [\\$500,000 fine](#) imposed on the county and Casella for an assortment of environmental violations between the years 2015 and 2022.

The violations included 225 documented cases of excessive hydrogen sulfide in ambient air, failure to properly grade slopes, failure to install gas collection infrastructure and multiple releases of toxic leachate and contaminated stormwater.

Required corrective actions were spelled out in a September 2022 state Department of Environmental Conservation [consent order](#) that applies to the county and the subsidiary, Casella Waste Services of Ontario, LLC.

Casella was responsible for paying the fine under its contract with the county.

DeBolt said Friday that county officials were working with Casella and the DEC to understand what happened. "At this time, the cause of the permanent cap failure is still unknown," he said.

"It appears that while the permanent capping soil was displaced and that some damage was sustained by the synthetic waste barrier, it does not appear that any waste material was exposed, compromised, or migrated outside the confines of the landfill."

The DEC publishes regulatory specifications for permanent cap design that are intended to provide redundancy to ensure that waste is not exposed to the outside environment.

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Peter is a three-time Pulitzer nominated reporter covering environmental issues through his first-of-its-kind digital publication [The Water Front](#). He's won an array of Associated Press, UPI, and Society of Professional Journalist awards. His reporting on environmental issues continues to be featured in prominent New York publications and is available on FingerLakes1.com through an exclusive content partnership. Have a question or lead? Send it to [peter@fingerlakes1.com](mailto:peter@fingerlakes1.com).

