

Hazardous Waste Incineration - A Deadly Deal

Hazardous waste incinerators were the "answer" by the combustion industry (manufacturers, designers, and engineers for oil, coal, and nuclear power plants, and large-scale heating systems) to "solve" the hazardous waste crisis. With new laws making it more difficult to just dump hazardous waste, and with regulations about hazardous waste landfills making them very expensive, incineration was promoted as a economical alternative.

Incineration of wastes is a concept that really involves what might be called "adult magical thinking" - that somehow, when you burn something, it "goes away". We know from physical laws, however, that matter does not "go away" - it merely changes state. Even if incineration worked perfectly, heavy metals and radioactive materials are not destroyed - they are vaporized and emitted by the smokestack or stay behind in the incinerator ash, making that ash itself toxic waste. The volume has been reduced (and in some cases this does not even happen), but the poisons remain.

Real-world incinerators are far worse than ideal. The EPA, in court, has never been able to testify that any hazardous waste incinerator can operate at its required "Destruction and Removal Efficiency" - the percentage of toxic organic compounds that are reduced to non-toxic emissions. The supposed requirement for such incinerators is 99.9999% (in other words, 1 part per million of the waste is released into the environment), but in real practice the efficiency is between 99.9% and 99.99%. In other words, 100 to 1000 times as much toxic material reaches the environment as the EPA admits in public announcements.

In a now-famous case in Jacksonville, Arkansas, a company called VERTAC walked away from 22 million pounds of organochlorine hazardous waste, and the EPA moved in with a Superfund hazardous waste incinerator. During the incineration period before it was shut down by a Federal Judge, the dioxin blood level of nearby residents increased by 22%, and the 9600 drums of waste "destroyed" had been "reduced" to 12,000 drums of dioxin-laced salt and 1,730 drums of dioxin-laced ash, for a net *gain* of 43%. (Excerpted from Rachel's Hazardous Waste News, now Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly, #311 and #325, published by Environmental Research Foundation.)

It is the position of CQS that all hazardous waste incinerators are an imminent threat to public health and should be shut down immediately, and that incineration of hazardous waste should be banned worldwide. There are numerous waste destruction technologies that are safer and cleaner than incineration. (See the pages below for more information.)

Hazardous Waste Topics

- [Alternative Hazardous Waste Treatment](#)

Commercial Hazardous Waste Incinerators - Canada

Alberta

- Alberta Special Waste Treatment Center, Swan Hills, Alberta

Ontario

- Laidlaw, Sarnia, Ontario;

Quebec

- Laidlaw Environmental Services, Inc., Mercier, Quebec;

Commercial Hazardous Waste Incinerators - U.S.

The EPA now maintains a complete list of all handlers of hazardous waste at http://www.epa.gov/oswfiles/rcraweb/web_reporting/tsds.htm