

Health Impacts of Waste Incineration

Support House Bill 961, Senate Bill 548, and Senate Bill 516

We know that burning fossil fuels like coal and oil is bad for Marylanders' health and our climate. But burning trash for energy is even worse. Compared to coal, burning trash releases 90% more greenhouse gas emissions per unit of energy.¹

Given trash incineration's harms to public health and the climate, Maryland should remove trash incineration from our Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS).



Burning Trash Harms Our Health

Incineration emits NOx (nitrogen oxides) and PM 2.5 (particulate matter). NOx is an air pollutant which, when mixed with volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and sunlight, forms ozone pollution, which can cause chest pain, coughing, and increased risk of asthma attacks. PM 2.5 exposure can cause lung damage, increased risk of heart attack, and more.

In the U.S., communities of color and low-income communities are exposed to disproportionate levels of pollution.² In Baltimore, Wheelabrator's Baltimore Refuse Energy Systems Co. (BRESKO) incinerator is the city's largest source of air pollution. Emissions from BRESKO result in health and mortality costs upwards of \$55 million dollars a year. Studies have shown that living near BRESKO increases lung cancer risk as much as living with a smoker.¹ Despite this, trash incineration currently qualifies as "renewable energy" and receives subsidies in Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard.



Three Ways to Take Out the Trash in Maryland's Clean Energy Policy

- Pass House Bill 961, which would remove incineration from the Renewable Portfolio Standard.
- Pass Senate Bill 548, which would remove incineration from the Renewable Portfolio Standard.
- Pass Senate Bill 516, the "Clean Energy Jobs Act," which would double the state's RPS while removing incineration as a qualifying resource.

BRESCO by the Numbers³

BRESCO facility opened in **1985**

709,900 Tons of waste processed in 2017

200,000+ tons of toxic ash sent to landfill⁴

2,250 tons of waste processed per day

152,358 tons of CO₂ emitted annually

219,404 pounds of methane emitted annually

456 tons of NO_x emitted annually

120 pounds of lead emitted annually

100 pounds of PM 2.5 emitted annually

60 pounds of mercury emitted annually

Montgomery County Resource Recovery Facility (Dickerson) by the Numbers³

Facility opened in **1995**

600,000 tons of waste processed annually⁶

180,000+ tons of toxic ash sent to landfills⁷

1,800 tons of waste processed per day⁷

270,027 tons of CO₂ emitted annually

378,630 pound of methane emitted annually

36 tons of SO₂ emitted annually

421 tons of NO_x emitted annually

46 Pounds of mercury emitted annually⁸

These are the only two incinerators in Maryland that receive RPS subsidies. Both are non-unionized facilities.

The Science Is Clear: Burning Trash is Not Clean Energy

While there was some question in the past, the consensus among scientists and public health advocates has now firmly concluded that burning trash is not renewable.

In 2018, the Maryland Senate voted 36-8 to remove trash incineration from the Renewable Portfolio Standard. Over 600 entities across Maryland, including Baltimore City and Montgomery County, have also passed resolutions declaring that burning trash should not count as renewable energy.

Environmental and Health Benefits of New Wind and Solar

Removing waste as a form of renewable energy from the Renewable Portfolio Standard **will not** cause the trash incinerators to close. Removing waste **will** allow the Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to go to truly clean energy. The new demand for renewable energy caused by removing all waste incineration from the RPS would lead to development of 467 megawatts of new wind energy.

By reducing fossil fuel power plant pollution throughout our region, new clean energy development from removing waste incineration from the RPS would decrease carbon emissions, reduce health care costs, and deliver economic benefits regionally.

Please support House Bill 961 and Senate Bill 548, which would remove incineration from the RPS, and Senate Bill 516, which would double the state's RPS while removing incineration. By doing so, Maryland can be a national renewable energy leader with cleaner air, healthier people and a robust economy that provides well-paying jobs to a large and diverse renewable energy workforce.

Take Action: Pass House Bill 961, Senate Bill 548, and Senate Bill 516

For more information visit ccanactionfund.org/maryland/fighting-toxic-incinerators/



References:

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7. Greenberger, Lauren. “Montgomery County Incinerator Update.” *Sugarloafcitizens.org*, Sept. 2018, www.sugarloafcitizens.org/acfdoc.php

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