

Concerns rise over incinerator emissions

Can any chartered civil engineer explain why the Institution of Civil Engineers promotes incineration of hazardous waste without looking at all the published evidence of severe health damage and reduction of life span caused by the toxic PM 2.5 emissions?

Coinbrook incinerator was built in 1990 when the health of Slough was very good, but Slough's health has been in freefall since then.

Michael Ryan of Shrewsbury is a chartered civil engineer whose last report about birth defect rates in Greater London at www.ukhr.org includes Slough data.

This data provides further evidence of worsening health associated with incinerator emissions in downwind primary care trust areas such as Hillingdon, Hounslow, Harrow, etc, as well as in Slough.

Slough Borough Council is aware of Mr Ryan's birth defect report and I am glad Councillor Stokes "feels that this may be an appropriate issue for investigation".

Margaret Stoklosinski
Coinbrook

Shropshire Star, page 9, 23 March 2006

Margaret Stoklosinski was an elected councillor at Slough during 1999 - 2002 and was the Liberal Party spokesperson for environmental matters. She was the only councillor to oppose the planning application for a new incinerator at Colnbrook, opposing it on health grounds. Her dissent on this issue was recorded on official minutes.

The health damage of the huge new incinerator was never discussed during the planning process, despite an abundance of health and premature death data following the 1990 incinerator. In 1990, the standardised mortality ratio (SMR) in Slough was 88, one of the lowest in the Country. By 2001, Slough's SMR had soared to 121 (the tenth highest in the UK), according to ONS data.

Councillor Richard Stokes was re-elected to Slough Council in 2004 having pledged to revoke the planning consent for Grundon's new municipal waste (54 tonnes per hour) and clinical & radioactive waste (1.25 tonnes per hour) incinerators at Colnbrook. Planning consent was not revoked.

Michael Ryan, Chartered Civil Engineer became interested in health issues after realising that the deaths of two of his children could have been caused by emissions from nearby Shrewsbury Hospital incinerator. That incinerator was forced to close in August 1995, when Crown immunity no longer applied to the lack of emission controls. There have been zero infant deaths in Copthorne ward in the years 1998 - 2003. He has found that suicides are mostly clustered in the electoral wards with high rates of infant mortality. Dothill ward had zero infant deaths in each of the years 1995 - 2003. The primary school in that ward had the lowest asthma inhaler usage in Shropshire at 1.9% of children in years 3 - 6. [See Shropshire Asthma Survey www.ukhr.org/asthma]

No need to worry over incinerator emissions

Margaret Stoklosinski raises concerns with regard to emissions of fine particulate matter (known as PM2.5) in emissions from incinerators (letters, March 23).

We have studied emissions from waste incinerators for the Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We examined the risks to health from incinerator emissions, including the question of PM2.5, and also those from other activities.

Fine particulates can in general be harmful to health and it is important to control emissions of these substances. To do this, we should look at where fine particulates come from. The main sources of fine particulate matter are road traffic, electricity generation, home cooking and heating.

Waste incinerators make a tiny contribution to emissions of fine particulate matter. And because incinerator emissions are from the tops of chimneys rather than at ground level (like cars, ovens and home boilers), they make even less of a contribution to the amounts of PM2.5 that children and adults breathe in.

Many people are worried about fine particles. But if you are, please do not make yourself even more worried about waste incinerators – there's no need.

Jonathan Davies
Director, Sustainable
Resource Management
Enviros Consulting Ltd
Shrewsbury

Jonathan Davies, Director of Enviros, is a co-author of DEFRA's 2004 report "Review of Environmental and Health Effects of Waste Management". That report failed to examine any actual health data, but was used by Elliot Morley MP to obscure the fact that incinerators are "Weapons of Mass Destruction" (see report of that name and also "Maiming and Killing in Cambs" by Dr Dick van Steenis MBBS at www.countrydoctor.co.uk)

Elliot Morley MP, Environment Minister was reported in the article "Incineration of Rubbish is Better than Landfill" (Guardian 7 May, 2004) as follows: "incinerating large quantities of household waste has no detrimental effect on human health", but Mr Morley's department failed to examine any health data or heed hundreds of published journal articles with health data in the USA.

The above Guardian article also stated "yesterday's report (the above DEFRA report) was reviewed twice by the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of science, and heavily criticised for being inaccurate and lacking data. In the first review the Society said any conclusions drawn as a result of the report were likely to be misleading." and "The Society also said it had not reviewed the extended summary of the report."

Emissions are major concern

The wild allegations of Jonathan Davies (Letters, April 17), explains why Defra does not have a clue nor has any references to proper journals or measurements.

No mainland UK incinerator has a stack-top monitor, no council monitors PM2.5 particulates and any honest doctor would confirm published studies on health data by Harvard SPH, USEPA, Health Effects Institute, Belgian incinerator 20-year study or UK data on www.ukhr.org and www.countrydoctor.co.uk

So how could Jonathan "study" without data?

Has Jonathan not heard of gravity or other laws of physics or the fact that only PM2.5 and smaller enter the lungs and maim and kill?

The biggest emitters are oil refineries, incinerators, waste-oil burning equipment and cement works burning waste.

Has he read the recent Harvard follow-up study?

Incinerator PM2.5 emissions cause asthma, heart attacks, depression, diabetes 2, cancers, birth defects, lower IQ, and infections.

Those at risk need selenium and HEPA filters.

Dr Dick van Steenis
Hereford

Dr Dick van Steenis MBBS carried out a childhood asthma survey in West Wales (The Lancet, 8 April, 1995) finding large variations in asthma rates between locations downwind and upwind of the oil refinery/power station complex at Milford Haven waterway. In Whitland, 38% (thirty-eight) of four to 5-year-olds were chronic asthmatics compared with just 1% (one) in Aberaeron and other upwind locations. The cancer admission rate in the high asthma zones was 20 times higher than in the low asthma zones. The referral rates to Consultant Psychiatrists for clinical depression were nine times higher in the high asthma zones compared with the low asthma zones.

Dr van Steenis was an expert witness at the 2003 Public Inquiry for the Hull incinerator application by WRG, and that application was rejected. Note that Enviros Ltd are consultants to WRG.

In 1957, South Wales was at the forefront of world research into health effects of air pollution and the following is from the Harvard's website article "A Tale of Six Cities":

"On a 1957 trip with Whittnberger to a coal-mining region of Wales, he [Dr Benjamin Ferris] saw entirely new techniques being used to study the impact of air quality. They started out by selecting a probability sample of coal miners, and once they had determined the sample size, they made an effort to get everyone in the group examined..."

The USEPA's Clean Air Interstate Rule (2005) will produce annual savings of "more than \$100bn in health and visibility benefits per year by 2015 and will substantially reduce premature mortality in the Eastern United States". The new rule will "provide health and environmental benefits valued at over 25 times the cost of compliance".

Research shows danger of emissions

Jonathan Davies of Enviros (Letters, April 17) has shown that Defra must have chosen a clueless consultant to “prove” that incinerator emissions are harmless when all medical evidence and published medical journal articles show the opposite.

MPs have already accused civil servants of hiding health dangers of incinerators (Guardian, November 1, 2000).

Mr Davies forgets that gravity ensures that PM2.5 particles fall to earth no matter how high the incinerator chimney stack.

Mr Davies alleged “we have studied emissions from waste incinerators” but there are no PM2.5 stacktop or community monitors in the UK — so where did he get his data?

Mr Davies alleged “we have examined the risks to health from incinerator emissions” but could not have examined illness and premature death rates within range of an incinerator and compared with a “control” area that is free from such PM2.5 emissions otherwise he would have seen immediately that incinerators are extremely dangerous and can be readily proved to be so.

BLISS, the children’s charity, recently publicised the huge variation in rates of infant mortality among the 303 primary care trusts in England.

The 10 PCTs with the highest rates were all subject to PM2.5 emissions from incinerators, while the 10 PCTs with the lowest rates were all free from high PM2.5.

Michael Ryan, Shrewsbury

The Enviros office at Shrewsbury should have a view of the Ironbridge Power Station stack. On most days, the plume from that stack is visible and usually grounds on electoral wards in Telford or Broseley/Bridgnorth area.

That stack is over 600 feet high, but the PM2.5 emissions still manage to fall to earth, spreading a predictable pattern of illness and premature death.

Mr Davies can see the variations in childhood asthma rates around the Power Station on this site.

Dothill Junior School had the lowest percentage of years 3 - 6 children bringing inhalers to school for asthma. Dothill ward had zero infant deaths in each of the years 1995 - 2003. All electoral wards with high childhood asthma had higher than average infant mortality rates.

Ironbridge Power Station has been co-incinerating coal and waste oils and paint waste, thus causing a reduction in average particle size from PM5 to PM2.2. This means that the majority of emissions have become small enough to enter the lungs and also the toxic content of those emissions are far worse leading to an increase in a wide range of illnesses including depression - hence clustering of suicides in electoral wards with high infant mortality rates.

Effects of emissions on public

Jonathan Davies of Enviros (Letters, April 17) forgot to mention that he was a chartered civil engineer when he wrote his letter about PM2.5 emissions from incinerators and I have read the subsequent letters from Dr Dick van Steenis and Michael Ryan with interest.

Unlike Messrs Davies, van Steenis and Ryan, I have held public office as a councillor and was Liberal Party spokesperson on environmental matters in Slough when new incinerators were proposed.

I was aware of the serious health damage from incinerators and being the only councillor to oppose the planning consent for them I had to insist that my dissent was put on record.

I have never been to the Institution of Civil Engineers HQ, but I attended a series of lectures at the London HQ of RIBA, where I heard Dr Dick van Steenis's lecture, 'Incinerators Weapons of Mass Destruction? Will Mr Davies take part in a public debate about incinerators and health?'

Margaret Stoklosinski
Colnbrook

There has been a major public health failure in Slough, where adverse health effects following the 1990 incinerator at Grundon's have been ignored, despite the ongoing concern of Margaret Stoklosinski.

Just like Dr John Snow (Cholera, London), Margaret Stoklosinski was right when everyone else was wrong.

Dr Snow was acknowledged as being correct about contaminated water causing cholera some 30 years after his death. Everyone else believed that cholera was spread via the stench of sewage.

Today, most people cannot grasp the fact that industrial PM2.5 emissions cause a range of illnesses. They can understand that eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water makes us ill. There seems to be a mental block about accepting that breathing contaminated air does any harm to health or shorten life expectancy.

Dr Snow is the father of epidemiology and yet, the epidemiology of industrial PM2.5 pollution has been ignored by the medical establishment since Dr Dick van Steenis' West Wales asthma survey results were reported in The Lancet, 8 April, 1995. The UK could have copied the US Clean Air Act of 1997, and had no NHS or pension crisis. The drug companies have had a bonanza from our failing health.