



**Frederick County
Government
Frederick, Maryland**

News Release

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COMMISSIONERS PRESENT ACCURATE INFORMATION ON SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

FREDERICK, MD – The Frederick Board of County Commissioners today responded to recent statements by Clean Water Action (CWA) regarding waste-to-energy (WTE) facilities and the county's waste management programs.

Board President Jan Gardner said, "The County Commissioners want the citizens of Frederick County to be accurately informed regarding these important facts about waste-to-energy."

CWA statements below are shown in italics. The statements that follow are responses by the county:

Incinerators transform garbage into harmful air pollutants and toxic ash. For example, burning plastic bags and organic materials creates dioxins, which even in small amounts cause cancer, immune disorders and reproductive problems.

Combustion of many materials, including wood, results in emissions, including dioxins. In fact, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), one of the largest sources of dioxins released into the atmosphere occurs as a result of forest fires. In a waste-to-energy facility, these chemicals are subjected to very high temperatures (over 1800 degrees F), which destroy dioxins. In contrast, when wood is burned in a fireplace or woodstove, dioxins are created, but not destroyed because they are not subjected to high temperatures. The amount of dioxins which are allowed to leave a WTE facility are insignificant compared to numerous other sources of this pollutant. Health risk studies of operating facilities in the U.S. consistently have shown their emissions are safe.

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The 1,500 per-ton-day incinerator would generate 450 tons of toxic ash to be dumped at a landfill, eventually leaching into ground water.

Modern waste-to-energy facilities reduce the volume of solid waste by 90%. Under a regional project with Frederick County recovering energy from 900 tons-per-day of its waste, 225 to 270 tons of ash would be created, however the ash volume would be only 10% of the trash processed; WTE ash is denser than trash.

All ash generated by WTE facilities in the U.S. is subject to testing using a U.S. EPA laboratory procedure known as the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP). TCLP test results from every operating waste-to-energy plant in the U.S. demonstrate that the ash is not hazardous and does not exhibit toxicity characteristics. Waste-to-energy ash residue is often recycled as daily cover at municipal waste landfills. If the ash was "toxic" and did not pass the TCLP Test as prescribed by EPA, the material could not go to a Municipal Solid Waste landfill. A nine-year study of leachate (water from the bottom of a landfill) leaving a waste-to-energy ash landfill conducted under the auspices of EPA showed that this leachate is not dangerous and meets drinking water standards, with the exception of chlorides (salt) content. Many use the myth that ash is toxic to scare people, but these statements are false.

Frederick's population would have to literally double to reach the 900 tons of waste required to operate at the proposed incinerator's capacity. This likely means that Frederick County will need to import trash from other counties or states.

During calendar year 2007 Frederick County received approximately 700 tons per day of trash, not including recyclables collected by the County's contractors or directly delivered to its Reich's Ford Road recycling center by citizens. On peak days in 2007 the County received as much as 1,734 tons per day. Based on these disposal rates, a 900 ton-per-day waste-to-energy plant would not be large enough for Frederick County's maximum planned population. The 900 ton-per-day size is predicated on the County achieving its 60% recycling goal which will ensure that adequate capacity exists for the entire planning period. As with water supply systems and wastewater treatment systems, the County would size the solid waste disposal facility so that it will meet the County's needs based on long-term population and waste projections, which compliment the project planning and use period, which can exceed 50 years. A proposed regional waste-to-energy project with Carroll County would include up to 600 tons per day of waste, with ash from our neighboring county's waste recycled or managed by Carroll County.

As the County's population increases, as anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan, the amount of trash and recyclables will increase. This is not taken into account by CWA, which prefers to calculate waste generation numbers based on current waste numbers. It would be financially irresponsible to build a WTE facility which

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was completely full the first day of operation. The County does not plan and construct infrastructure knowing that it will not be adequate for planning period. Maryland law (Environment Article 9-512) requires the County to design and construct such infrastructure so it will be adequate for the planned growth.

Incinerators emit more carbon dioxide per megawatt-hour than coal-fired power plants. Those and other air pollutants then fall on parks and playing fields, farm crops and dairy pastures, working their way into the food chain.

This statement is simply incorrect. On a pound of Carbon Dioxide per Megawatt Hour of electricity generated basis, waste-to-energy plants emit less carbon dioxide than coal, oil or natural gas fired power plants. Waste-to-energy facilities are actually "carbon sinks," because the energy from these facilities offsets the burning of fossil fuels to make electricity and they divert trash from a landfills, where much more significant greenhouse gases are produced. Waste-to-energy is a net reducer of carbon dioxide and this has been recognized by the European Union, U.S. Conference of Mayors, EPA and the State of Maryland. A recent independent study of Frederick County's waste management alternatives completed by RTI International clearly shows the substantial green house gas emission reduction that would be associated with waste-to-energy as opposed to using landfills.

Frederick residents must call on County Commissioners to institute a 5-year moratorium on the construction of any incinerator to study alternative solutions like a Resource Recovery Park for waste diversion and recycling.

Studies have shown that communities that employ waste-to-energy technology typically have higher recycling rates than communities that do not utilize waste-to-energy. The County has an excellent resource recovery and recycling operation at the Reich's Ford Road landfill, its 12 satellite facilities, and through contract services with Recycle America. The County already has a 25,000 ton per year yard waste mulching and composting facility which produces high quality materials that are sold to offset other non-revenue producing recycling programs. With the completion of the new transfer station later this year, the current curbside recycling program will be converted to single stream collection, making recycling more accessible and convenient for residents. Haulers will be able to drop off recyclable materials from commercial properties at the new transfer station. Notwithstanding these major recycling initiatives, the County will still need to dispose of material that cannot be recycled. Recovering energy from this waste is one option that County needs to consider.

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Energy produced from the combustion of solid waste is considered green energy and electricity produced by the nation's waste-to-energy facilities reduces net greenhouse gas emissions. This fact has been recognized by the U.S. Conference of Mayors through the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. This agreement, signed by 400 mayors, supports a seven percent reduction in greenhouse gases from 1990 levels by 2012. It also clearly recognizes waste-to-energy technology as a means to achieve that goal. In fact, the European union, which has effectively banned the disposal of organic material in landfills, is relying on greenhouse gas reductions or offsets associated with WTE facilities to help meet their Kyoto protocol requirements. In 2001, by Executive Order 01.01.2001.02, "Sustaining Maryland's Future with Clean Power, Green Buildings and Energy Efficiency," The State of Maryland defined energy generated from the combustion of municipal solid waste as "Green Energy."

In Maryland the EPA and the Maryland Department of the Environment regulate WTE facilities. Nationwide, WTE facilities have excellent compliance records. Several recent studies by independent organizations have established WTE as net reducers of greenhouse gases.

There are 89 WTE plants in the US. Three of these facilities are located in Maryland, two in Northern Virginia and three facilities in Southern Pennsylvania. Montgomery County, Maryland's, WTE facility alone produces enough electricity to power 40,000 homes.

As the County continues to pursue a reliable, safe, and environmentally sensitive solution to managing solid waste for the next 50 years, it would be inappropriate not to consider waste-to-energy technology that can help address local waste disposal and energy needs while reducing greenhouses gas emissions that may threaten the world.

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