

# Waste Not

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# 21

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**MAINE: KTI'S 600 TPD RDF INCINERATOR BAGHOUSE SPEWS 'WHITE RAIN'.** According to the September 1988 issue of *Waste Alternatives* (pgs 12-15), "KTI's Biddeford RDF plant proves that waste-to-energy plants -even ones located next to a business district- can make good neighbors...(and) had helped improve the neighborhood's appearance." But, the following account in the *Portland Press Herald* of 8-27-88 tells a different story. "For the second straight day, parts of Biddeford and Saco were showered with a grayish-white powdery ash...**MERC (Maine Energy Recovery Systems)** officials accepted responsibility for Friday's two showers but said they still are not sure their incinerator is to blame for the white, powdery coating left on neighborhoods in Saco early Thursday morning...In the meantime, plant and city officials are advising residents to wash their cars and not to eat coated vegetables from their gardens...The **G.E. subsidiary (GE Environmental Systems Designs)** designed and installed the baghouse scrubber system, which is where the problem apparently arose, according to **MERC's** Parenteau. The baghouse, a system of filters designed to stop fly ash from escaping through the smokestack, is controlled by a computer, which may be responsible for the malfunction, Parenteau said. When an equipment failure occurs, emissions go out the stack without being filtered by the baghouse. That occurred at least twice Friday. While emissions during these failures exceed the plant's DEP air license, there are allowances in the license for equipment malfunctions, DEP environmental specialist Richard Creswell said. 'If there is a failure in the system, they are just supposed to take measures to fix it,' he said. Channel 8 television reporter Lisa Gardner was interviewing residents of Maple Street in Biddeford, close to the plant, when the first equipment failure occurred Friday. 'I was talking to some of the neighbors about what happened (Thursday) when we happened to look at the smokestack,' she said. 'A huge cloud of thick, black smoke came pouring out. It probably didn't last more than a minute and then a light, gray ash started falling from the sky.' At the same time, Steve Pate of Wildwood Drive, Saco, was driving his convertible, with the top down, across the Route 1 bridge in Biddeford. 'I could see this stuff coming out of the smokestack, a grayish cloud,' he said. 'All of a sudden it was like a snowstorm. It was only two or three seconds' worth, but I was covered with the stuff.' Pate went to Tony's Variety on Main Street in Biddeford, where owner Tony Dutremble was flabbergasted by his appearance. 'I couldn't believe it. He came in and started shaking (the dust) on the counter,' Dutremble said. Pate then went to **MERC**, where he had to wait in line behind three or four other residents to complain. For the second straight day, the company handed out coupons for a free car wash...The **Maine People's Alliance** led a rally at a recent Biddeford City Council meeting, drawing more than 200 residents of Biddeford and Saco who had complaints about noise and odor from **MERC**. In response to the complaints, **MERC** severed its operating contract with **GE**, then put **GE** workers on the **MERC** payroll to continue plant operations."

**OREGON: WHITE RAIN IN MARION COUNTY??** "It looked bad when a neighbor complained that the \$47 million state-of-the-art garbage-burning incinerator here was covering his car windshield with ashes. It didn't make sense, said Jim Sears, Marion County solid waste director. The federal government considers the Brooks plant a model for the next generation of garbage burners, with all the latest pollution-control devices, so the particles were puzzling. The white fallout appeared only in one small area, and Sears began looking for a bug in the system. With the help of Portland State University scientists, 'we found there is a peculiar type of moth that lays eggs in the trees, and caused a white powder to fall on the windshield. Even so, the neighbor 'swore up and down that it was coming from the plant.'" *Chicago Tribune*, 10-28-87.

**CORRECTION TO WASTE NOT #20.** In our review of "Wrapped in Plastics" the word prophyllene appeared several times. The correct spelling is **propylene**. E.C.

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**NEW YORK: OSWEGO COUNTY RESIDENTS PETITION OVER ODOR AND FALLING ASH.** This county-run, 200 tpd **Consumat** incinerator, located in Volney, went on line in February 1986. There are no tipping fees as the county picks up tab through taxes. The ash is being sent to a lined sanitary landfill where it is mixed with other garbage. A petition signed by 50 residents and presented to the Volney Town Board on Sept. 8 stated: "We the undersigned have experienced odor problems and/or falling ashes in our neighborhood..." On 9-12-88 Oswego Valley News reported: "The floating ash issue was first raised at the July town board meeting by Mrs. Rose...Since that time the problem 'has only become worse,' Mrs. Rose stated. 'Something is definitely wrong out there.' The odor that Mrs. Rose complained about several months ago has also become stronger. She noted that several people have come up to her to notify her about sinus problems that they never had before. Supervisor Kitts told the board that he had seen the ash floating through the air himself ...There was a steam leak at the E.R.F. (Energy Recovery Facility) Sept. 7, which plant manager Frank Visser admitted caused a garbage-like smell that day...Jim Reed, a petition signer, noted that he had heard from a friend who worked at the ERF 'that they throw everything in that burner. They've got restrictions, but they are never paid any attention to.' Whether those allegations are true or not, it does not deny the neighbor's fears. 'On Sept. 1 at 5:24 pm there was pitch black smoke coming out of the ERF's second stack in the south,' Mrs. Rose said. 'I thought a person should only see white smoke emitting from the stacks.'" **Waste Not** interviewed Volney councilwoman Marie Austin. According to Mrs. Austin the county runs many tours through this incinerator. She suggests that people going on such tours should insist on talking to the residents of the area, and said that they would hear a very different story. Mrs. Austin noted that in 1987 when the incinerator ash was tested by the NY DEC it failed the EPA toxicity test for lead. For more information contact Marie Austin at 315-592-7603.

**MASSACHUSETTS: "UP IN SMOKE"**, is the title of **MASS PIRG's** report on solutions to the state's solid waste crisis. According to the report, Mass. is proposing incinerators that will burn more than 85% of the state's waste/resources. "For 15 years the state has aggressively promoted incinerators by providing 500 million dollars in tax-exempt bonds to incinerator developers, suggesting to communities that they contract with incinerators, helping incinerators acquire sites and develop markets for the energy they produce, and assisting incinerators to overcome regulatory hurdles...In December 1987, the legislature finally provided funding by earmarking \$45 million in the Solid Waste Act for a state recycling and composting program. However, this support pales in comparison to the more than onehalf billion dollars in tax-exempt financing that the state has made available to the incinerator industry over the past 15 years. Under the state's current policies, the recycling program, which is minimally funded and has no definite deadlines or goals for its implementation, will likely do little to slow the state's overwhelming momentum towards 85% incineration." The report outlines alternative disposal options for Mass -source reduction, recycling, composting, and landfill. It overviews recycling technologies, and gives a step-by-step approach for a state plan. Available for \$10 from

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**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**

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