Waste Not

The Weekly Reporter for rational resource management

#45

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March 7, 1989

CALIFORNIA: FIRE AT FOSTER WHEELER'S 330 TPD MASS-BURN INCINERATOR IN COMMERCE. The Commerce incinerator suffered a major fire on the evening of March 7, 1989. The fire started in the garbage pit and went out of control. Apparently the sprinkler system didn't work and the fire department, donning 'moonsuits' after arriving on the scene, worked for 5 1/2 hours to quell the fire. The incinerator is shut down. According to Will Baca the fire department directed their water hoses for five hours into the garbage pit and what is left is a 'soupy waste' that the Commerce Refuse-to-Energy Authority (CREA) plans to burn with new waste. This must come as a blow to CREA which is fighting to continue to burn after the Calif. South Coast Air Quality Management Board denied CREA a permit-to-operate on 1-27-89. (See **Waste Not #39-40**).

MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY (MPCA): "DIOXINS MAY FORM WITHIN THE ELECTROSTATIC PRECIPITATOR" EQUIPMENT IN SOLID WASTE INCINERATORS. The following are excerpts from a MPCA News Release dated February 24, 1989. "Two years ago, the **Red Wing** municipal solid waste incinerator had unacceptable levels of dioxin coming from its stacks. We knew why --the plant was not being maintained and operated well. Now we find that the emissions are improved, but they are nowhere near low enough. This is a serious problem that has got to be fixed,' said MPCA Commissioner Gerald Willet. A study of dioxins in the stack of the incinerator was a requirement of a stipulation agreement between the city and the MPCA in February 1988. Because of concerns that dioxin compounds might form within the stack, the agency required testing for dioxins in the air emissions before they entered the electrostatic precipitator (a pollution control device) and as they left the system. In the three tests, conducted last June, the **average level of dioxins in the emissions entering the device was 2.2 nanograms (ng) per dry standard cubic meter (dscm). The average leaving the device was 23.8 ng/dscm.** (Enquiries from **Waste Not** revealed that the dioxin levels were recorded as 2,3,7,8 TCDD toxic equivalents calculated using the US EPA methodology. **The 23.8 ng/dscm is at least 230 times greater than the Swedish dioxin guidelines for new incinerators**). Minnesota Department of Health staff have reviewed the data and have not indicated an immediate concern for human health. However because eating quantities of contaminated fish over time would be the most likely route by whichpeople would be affected, the agency plans to work with the Department of Natural Resources and the city of Red Wing to begin immediately to collect fish from that area of the Mississippi so that their tissue can be analyzed and more information can be made available before the start of heavy fishing this spring...Red Wing's municipal incinerator has been operating since 1982 to produce steam...A stipulation agreement with the MPCA in January 1985 required the city to add the electrostatic precipitator to trap the particulates. In September 1986, air emissions from the Red Wing incinerator were tested as a part of a municipal solid waste incineration study...At that time it was learned that relative high levels of **dioxins were being released (30 ng/dscm).** Upon examination of the maintenance and operating conditions, the MPCA discovered seriously corroded equipment and poor operating practices..." Red Wing has a 72 tpd mass-burn **Consumat** incinerator. For more information, or a copy of the MPCA's New Release, contact Susan Brustman, 612-296-7769.

PLASTICS: THE FRONT-END POLLUTION. **British Petroleum's (BP)** plant in Lima, Ohio, produces one-fourth of Ohio's hazardous wastes. In Lima, **BP** operates a crude oil refinery coupled with a chemical productions plant,where farm fertilizer and the plastic resin **Barex** (tradename) are produced. There are several chemicals produced at **BP's** Lima plant, chemicals that are needed for the production of **Barex.** The volume chemical used to manufacture **Barex** is **acrylonitrile,** a known carcinogen and an EPA-listed priority pollutant. Because the plastic resin **Barex** is patented the process is a 'secret', i.e., **BP** will not reveal the catalyst used in the process. In the 1970's the catalyst **BP** used in the manufacture of the plastic resin **Barex** was **URANIUM U235.**

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One of **BP's** buildings in Lima was contaminated by uranium and is still undergoing decontamination. Some holding ponds on the **BP** site are contaminated with uranium. The pollutants from the manufacture of **Barex** account for **58 million pounds of toxic waste each year,** much of it **deep well injected.** **BP** received permission in 1988 for a $30 million expansion to its **Barex** production. In an effort to understand and document the enormous amounts of hazardous waste produced in the manufacture of plastic resins and its health and environmental impact on the local community, **Waste Not** plans to publish, over the course of the year, a series of reports concerning **BP's** operations in Lima,Ohio.

HAZARDOUS WASTE INCINERATORS: HUGH KAUFMAN SAYS THAT EPA'S REGULATIONS ARE "NOT PROTECTIVE OF THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT." **British Petroleum (BP)** is conducting test burns of hazardous waste in Lima, Ohio. The portable hazardous waste incinerator being used is run by **Waste Tech Services,** now owned by **Amoco.** The Ohio **Allen County Citizens for the Environment (ACCE)** are opposing **BP's** plans to build a hazardous waste incinerator in Lima. The group fears that **BP's** long-term plans are to build an incinerator in Lima for hazardous waste from **BP's** nationwide plants. **BP** refuses to reveal its intentions to the community. **ACCE** invited Hugh Kaufman, director of US EPA's hazardous site control division, toLima to address the concerns of the community. According to Kaufman: "The EPA science advisory board in 1985 found that our regulatory approach is inadequate. Consequently, Congress strengthened the laws requiring us to write more stringent regulations, but that's something we haven't done under the Reagan administration...The EPA was supposed to have more stringent regulations out by 1987, but we stillhaven't even proposed them to the Federal Register. So in the area of incineration of hazardous wastes, EPA's regulations do not meet the Congressional mandates and are not protective of the public's health and environment...In the last eight years, the EPA has served more as a deregulatory agency rather than as a regulatory agency and we've got to turn that around...Basically, the regulations are based on a destruction efficiency of 99.99%,' he said. 'Because of the creation in the combustion process of new toxic compounds, destruction efficiency is not an accurate mechanism to protect the environment and the public health. On top of that...we don't even know all the compounds that are coming up the smokestacks of these incinerators. There's no way for us to even extrapolate how safe these incinerators are...The question that naturally follows is, 'What is the track record of the regulatory agencies in controlling air pollution from that particular plant? Only one time was the facility (**BP**) fined a large amount of money because of air pollution...And what did the regulatory agencies do after that fine? They moved the air monitoring devices 25 miles away'...(Kaufman) was asked why, if US EPA scientists oppose test burns in incinerators, the permits were granted to **BP**...'You've got powerful companies that are the main contributors to candidates and elected officials in both political parties. That buys access and smoothes the way for things to happen in a political environment..." Lima News, Ohio, February 6, 1989, Front page. For more information from **ACCE** contact Noreen Christoff, 1123 Rice Avenue, Lima, Ohio 45805, tel: 419-227-4495.

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"INCINERATION: TECHNOLOGY VS. SCIENCE?" This paper discusses the scientific problems posed by hazardous waste incineration. It is available from the author: Professor Richard Cook, Chemistry Dept., Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.

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