

MAINE: BEST AVAILABLE CONTROL TECHNOLOGY SHOWERS ASH ON BIDDEFORD FROM KTI'S 600 TPD RDF INCINERATOR. (See Waste Not # 21)

March 31, 1989: "CATASTROPHIC FAILURES" OF BAG HOUSE SYSTEM. "Biddeford and Saco city officials today met with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Dean C. Marriott, members of his staff, and State Toxicologist Robert Frakes to discuss local concerns over operations at the **Maine Energy Recovery Company (MERC)**. The agenda covered three 'catastrophic failures' last fall during which an ash-like substance was released from the facility, a health risk assessment of those releases, and developments in DEP's enforcement action against the company. Dennis Keschl, director of DEP's Bureau of Air Quality Control, explained that the failures occurred in the plant's 'baghouse' where exhaust gases are filtered. Here, malfunctions allowed the accumulated ash to be released into the air. To prevent future episodes of this type, one damper has been welded shut and a second physically restrained. In the event of a pressure build-up, particles will no longer be able to by-pass the filters. Instead, a computerized system will either redirect the gases to properly functioning equipment or cause operations to shut down completely. Keschl said that these measures practically eliminate the possibility of a recurrence of last fall's events, which Toxicologist Frakes addressed in terms of their health implications. Studying samples collected by both the DEP and the City of Biddeford, Frakes performed a health risk assessment using what he called 'deliberately conservative' assumptions...Frakes also noted that his conclusions are applicable only to those people who were exposed to the ash during and between all three incidents. He summarized them by saying: **'Based on the information provided by DEP and on our calculations, it appears that certain subgroups of the population may have been exposed to unacceptable levels of lead and, to a lesser extent, dioxin.'** Specifically: A young child who ate a large amount of ash may have received a dose greater than that which is considered safe. Lead exposure can affect learning and intelligence in children under 6. Youngsters who ate an average amount of ash and a small amount of homegrown vegetables each day may have significantly increased their normal exposure to lead. Pregnant women who ate a large amount of homegrown vegetables daily may have received doses of lead and dioxin which exceed safe levels. The likelihood of toxic exposure depends on how well the vegetables were washed... Said Marriott: 'We can't tolerate the kinds of threats a facility like **MERC** poses when it functions improperly, and we are making every effort to make sure it doesn't...'
State of Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Press Information, March 31, 1989
For a full copy of this Press Information release, contact Deb Garrett at the DEP at 207-289-2811.

MAY 1, 1989: ANOTHER ASH SHOWER FROM KTI'S INCINERATOR. A **MERC** "official confirmed Sunday that ash was released from the trash-to-energy incinerator Saturday, but said it did not come from the plant's smokestacks, as have past emissions. Residents of Saco Island woke up Saturday to find a section of the development covered with a grayish-white ash. John King, a supervisor at the Biddeford incinerator, declined to identify the source of the ash, saying only that it was not from the smokestacks. Residents said they met with plant manager Steve Watruba Saturday, and he explained that the ash escaped from a storage bin at about 4 am. Jo Ann Twomey, who lives a half-mile from the plant, said Watruba told her something in the bin was clogged. When workers attempted to fix it, the ash escaped. 'He was trying to tell us it wasn't the same as the ash that came out of the smokestack,' Twomey said. Ashes released in previous smokestack emissions have been found to contain unacceptable levels of lead and dioxin. 'We maintain that ash is ash,' Twomey said. 'We're not going to let them downplay this (by saying) that since this did not come from the stacks there's not something wrong

with it.' She said she has collected a sample of the ash and plans to take it to officials in the DEP and the State Toxicologist's office today for testing. She said opponents of **MERC** will stage a candlelight vigil in front of the incinerator at 9pm Friday to protest the plant." Portland Press Herald, 5-1-89.

MAY 6, 1989: EYEWITNESS AND KTI OFFICIAL GIVE CONTRADICTIONARY STATEMENTS. Marc LeBlanc "working as security guard for Saco Island, said he saw billows of blacksmoke coming from **MERC's** smokestack between 7 and 9 pm. 'We haven't seen anything,' said Randall Parenteau, **MERC's** manager of operation services...Guy Farrell, Biddeford's code enforcement officer, said **MERC's** air-monitoring equipment was not working for a short period of time on Tuesday, and officials may never learn if there ever was an ash fall-out that day. 'They (**MERC** officials) claim that it wasn't monitoring what it should have been that day. That explanation is not adequate to us,' said Farrell...Parenteau maintains that **MERC's** computer records don't show that an ash fallout occurred. The State Attorney General's office plans to fine **MERC** for three ash fallouts last year... Le Blanc said he saw an ash fallout Tuesday night when he patrolled the grounds of Saco Island while working as a security guard. 'It was like somebody was burning tires. That's how intense and black it was,' said LeBlanc. 'I looked across the river. It was coming out of the stack like it was going out of style.' LeBlanc said he later noticed that his face was 'covered with a fine, black film.' Portland Press Herald.

MAY 17, 1989: Sharon and Robert Knox "said they were forced to move from their Biddeford home because of health problems caused by the **MERC** plant." Journal Tribune.

MAY 17, 1989: BIDDEFORD CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ORDINANCE TO FINE MERC. "The City Council got what it wanted Monday -the power to fine the **MERC**. Council members unanimously approved an ordinance that will fine **MERC** as much as \$25,000 a day for noise, odor and ash problems the waste-to-energy plant creates. This is the city's first ordinance written specifically for an energy-recovery plant. It is expected to go into effect in mid-June. Mayor Michael Cantara said **MERC** officials, admitting to odor, noise and ash problems, have not lived up to their promise that **MERC** would be a 'noiseless, odorless, good corporate neighbor'...Councilor Carl Poirier said Biddeford's ordinance makes the city less reliant on state regulatory action that forces **MERC** to correct problems. **MERC** has not been fined by the state for air pollutionsince it went on-line two years ago..." Portland Press Herald.

MAY 23, 1989: CITY COUNCILORS CALL FOR MORE AIR AND SOIL TESTS. "Faced with the threat of a mob of angry residents in front of City Hall, councilors Monday night agreed to a series of steps to ensure that the **MERC's** incinerator in Biddeford isn't posing a health threat to Saco residents. Councilors first approved sending a letter to the state DEP and the Attorney General's Office calling for more air and soil tests and the installation of monitoring stations to check emissions from the plant's smokestack... Mark Johnston of Elm Street said 'he and others living near the **MERC** plant had had odor and noise problems this past weekend...If something isn't done soon, Johnston said he'd lead a group of angry citizens to City Hall asking for abatements on their property taxes..." Journal Tribune.

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JUNE 7, 1989: "...Environmental Specialist Ricardo Cantu said **MERC** officials had indicated some ash escapes into the river when heavy rainfalls flood the plant's quench tanks, which are used to cool the ashes ...Under the regulations, **MERC** must store all waste in enclosed areas or containers to prevent odors from being detected at the edge of **MERC's** property; keep the outside of the building litter-free; keep all noise within DEP standards; and store all ash, particulate or residue in temporary containers to prevent its escape into the air, water or land." Journal Tribune.

MAY 19, 1989: "...If we could make the choice all over again, we might not be so quick to choose incineration ..." Editorial, Journal Tribune.

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