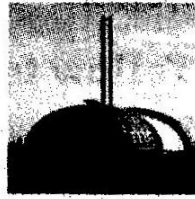


INCINERATORS

Burning evidence



A WHISTLEBLOWER who works as an emissions tester for a private company has cast doubt on the Environment Agency's inspection regime for emissions of potentially harmful fine particles from waste incinerators.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer has released a major study declaring that fine particles in air less than 2.5 microns in diameter (or PM 2.5) are now a known "Group 1" carcinogen. Particles below 2.5 microns in diameter are not filtered by the lungs and enter the bloodstream; they were already known to cause heart attack and stroke risk. Imperial College is conducting a two-year study of birth defects around incinerators, funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Environment Agency (EA) requires modern incinerators merely to have bag filters in the flue which collect a deposit from the smoke. An agency leaflet claims these are 99 percent effective – but a letter obtained by the *Eye* from the EA quotes very different figures in 2010 for the Veolia incinerator in Newhaven, East Sussex (pictured). The local EA officer writes that bag filters will only be 65-70 percent effective for PM 2.5 particles; below the diameter of PM 2.5, the bag filters are only 5-30 percent effective.

Incinerator companies can pay private companies to conduct tests for PM 2.5 once a year, and choose the day in advance. The whistleblower says that if the emissions test is a "fail", sometimes it is not reported to the EA and the test is redone when the incinerator is burning cleaner rubbish. The EA runs no inspections or unannounced visits and the site is untested for 363 days of the year.

The EA told the *Eye* that failing to report a "fail" would be a criminal offence – but gave no detail of any prosecution or investigation. It also said that continuous monitors record total particulate matter in incinerators.

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