



**Good Neighbors Don't
Poison The Air You Breathe**

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BUT

**STERICYCLE'S
*medical waste
incinerators***

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**Attend the PUBLIC HEARING
for Stericycle's Permit Renewal**

**Tuesday, May 25, 2010 6 pm
Alamance Community College**

Let the State know what you think about Stericycle continuing to burn medical waste in our community, polluting our health and environment

Write to info@bredl-medwaste.org to learn more about this issue

What is Stericycle? Stericycle is the largest medical waste treatment company in the country. It operates 2 huge incinerators in Haw River where hospitals and other health care facilities ship their medical waste. Their facility burned 26.3 million lbs. of medical waste in 2008-09.

Where is it located? 1168 Porter Ave., Haw River, NC 27258 (just east of Burlington). Two smoke stacks are visible from Interstate 40/85, looking south from Exit 150 (Jimmy Kerr Rd). It is surrounded by both older homes and newer residential developments, and located less than a half-mile from Alamance Community College.

What's wrong with medical waste incineration? Medical waste incinerators release tens of thousands of pounds of toxic air pollutants into the air annually that include mercury, dioxins, furans, particulates (soot), lead, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides (ozone), hydrogen chloride, chlorine, hydrofluoric acid, cadmium, and many other toxic by-products. Air pollution control equipment does not remove all these pollutants, and frequently fails, releasing raw, toxic air pollutants directly into the air.

How can these air pollutants harm me and my family? These toxic air emissions pollute our air, our gardens, crops and soil, rivers, lakes and streams. We breathe many of them into our lungs which can result in cancer, brain damage, birth defects, learning disabilities in children, asthma, liver and kidney damage, heart problems and many other illnesses.

Has Stericycle had any violations? Yes. Stericycle has had numerous violations throughout the years that have included releases of uncontrolled toxic air pollutants because of equipment failure, and releases of mercury and particulate matter that have exceeded the state and federal limits. Other violations have included overloading the incinerator with amounts of waste exceeding the hourly limits.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued new, more protective rules that require Stericycle to comply by October 6, 2014.

Four years is too late to wait for cleaner, safer air. We advocate that the NC DENR Division of Air Quality require Stericycle to comply with the new EPA rules by Oct. 6, 2012, to ensure that communities are protected from toxic air pollutants. Stack tests conducted in 2008 show that levels of lead, cadmium and mercury were being released from Stericycle's smokestacks above the new EPA standards. Lead levels were 8.3 times higher than the new standards; cadmium levels were 9% above the new standards; and mercury levels were over 28 times higher than the new standards.

How often are stack tests conducted? Stack tests are conducted every two years; mercury is tested yearly. Stack tests are a one-time "snapshot" of what's being released into the air. Waste burned one day may result in low levels of air pollutants while the next day they may be high! For example, in 2008, a stack test of mercury emissions revealed that mercury levels were close to 30 times higher than the new EPA standards while in 2009, a one-day stack test revealed mercury levels below the new standards.

How can exposure to air pollutants harm my family and me?

Here are a few:

- **Lead** is a highly toxic metal, and enters the body through contaminated food, water and air. Exposure to lead can result in anemia, high blood pressure, kidney damage, brain damage, lowered sperm counts and miscarriages. In children exposure can cause learning disabilities, aggression, and hyperactivity.
- **Cadmium** is suspected to cause cancer. Cadmium particles in the air can travel long distances before falling to the ground or surface water. Cadmium can stay in the body a very long time, and build up from years of low levels of exposure resulting in damage to the lungs, kidneys and digestive tract.
- **Mercury** is suspected to cause cancer, and can cause brain, kidney and liver damage, and is particularly toxic to children and the developing fetus.
- **Dioxins and furans** accumulate in the food chain. The developing fetus is most susceptible to dioxin exposure, and dioxin is passed to babies through the mother's breast milk. Dioxins cause cancer, suppress the immune system, disrupt the hormonal system, and impair neurological development.
- **Particulate matter** aggravates symptoms related to asthma, and is linked with respiratory problems, lung and cardiovascular diseases.

Are there alternatives to incineration of medical waste? Yes! Many facilities have switched to more environmentally-friendly methods of disposing medical waste such as autoclaving, microwaving, or chemical treatment. The majority of medical waste is burned unnecessarily. Stericycle already operates such facilities in other communities. Their under-used autoclave is in Concord, NC.

In 2009, Stericycle's revenues totaled approximately \$1.18 billion.

What price is your and your families' health worth?

Stericycle Awareness Campaign
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League
(336) 525-2003 or sdayton@swcp.com

Visit our website: bredl-medwaste.org