



CAVAN COUNTY COUNCIL

THE BURNING OF WASTE BY BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR
ADVICE ON THIS ISSUE
CONTACT CAVAN COUNTY COUNCIL'S
WASTE MANAGEMENT SECTION ON

(049) 433 1799

OR LOG ONTO

WWW.CAVANCOCO.IE

CAVAN COUNTY COUNCIL
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info@abbeyset.com | 049 4331932



**Race against
Waste**

THE BURNING OF WASTE

The burning of waste by householders, farmers, building contractors or businesses in back gardens, yards, fields or fireplaces may appear to some as a convenient, cheap method of waste disposal. However, the burning of waste in this manner can have significant effects on people's health and the environment. The most common materials burned in this way range from household waste such as paper, plastic, cardboard, cartons and bottles to other materials such as wood, furniture and tyres.

Some people may feel that the small fires, lit at home in a barrel or on the ground cause little damage. This is not the case. **Plastics, some paper products and rubber produce some of the most potent toxic pollutants when burned.**

IN FACT ALMOST THREE QUARTERS OF DIOXIN EMISSIONS IN IRELAND COME FROM DOMESTIC WASTE BURNING!

BURNING WASTE DOESN'T MAKE IT GO AWAY!

Many of the chemicals produced by open air fires are 'persistent' which means once produced they never go away and do not break down over time. Dioxins from an open air fire can settle on grass in nearby fields where they are then eaten by cattle or sheep. The dioxins then accumulate in the animals' fat. When somebody eats the meat or drinks the milk of this animal the dioxins end up in that person's body.



WHAT IS GIVEN OFF WHEN WASTE IS BURNED?

The burning of waste by individuals or businesses in open air fires can be defined as 'uncontrolled' burning and because of this there are no methods of 'capturing' the fumes and chemicals that are produced when waste is burned in this way.

Traditionally, waste was made up of simple things like wood, paper and organically produced food waste. However, modern business has changed much of this and a wide variety of chemicals are now used in the production of most of these materials.

Pollutants vary depending on the type of waste burned, but typically emissions include dioxins, ash, carbon monoxide, lead, carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, arsenic or mercury.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS?

Many people will have heard of lead and mercury poisoning, but other chemicals produced when burning may be equally dangerous. Dioxins are substances made up of Chlorine and Carbon and the health risks of exposure to these substances depend on a number of things, including how you are exposed to the chemicals, the duration, the amount, your general health and habits, and whether other chemicals are present. Scientists have researched the effects of large doses of dioxins on animals. While the impacts vary, serious health effects that occur include weight loss, skin disorders, liver problems, birth defects and cancer. Scientists do agree that our exposure to dioxins should be kept as low as possible.

Volatile Organic Compounds or VOC's can aggravate respiratory and heart illnesses and lead to kidney and liver failure. Carbon Monoxide can cause nausea and headaches. Ash can contain mercury, lead and arsenic which are toxic to humans and animals, causing heart problems, kidney and brain damage. Ash can irritate the eyes and throat, can damage lungs and can seriously affect those with asthma or certain allergies.



THE LAW

There are 3 important laws in Ireland, which relate to the burning of waste, even when it is being burnt as an alternative fuel.

1. The Air Pollution Act 1987 makes it an offence to cause a smoke nuisance or cause air pollution.
2. The Waste Management Act 1996 -2003 states that a person shall not dispose of waste in a manner that causes or is likely to cause environmental pollution
3. The Waste Management (Packaging) Regulations 2004 places obligations on all businesses to arrange for their packaging waste to be recycled. It is an offence not to do so and therefore such waste should not be disposed of in any other manner.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Avoid buying over packaged products.
- Avoid packaging that cannot be recycled readily
- Recycle your packaging waste by using your nearest Bring Centre or Civic Amenity site
- Compost all your vegetable scraps and garden waste
- Dispose of the rest of your waste responsibly - through a permitted waste collector.

