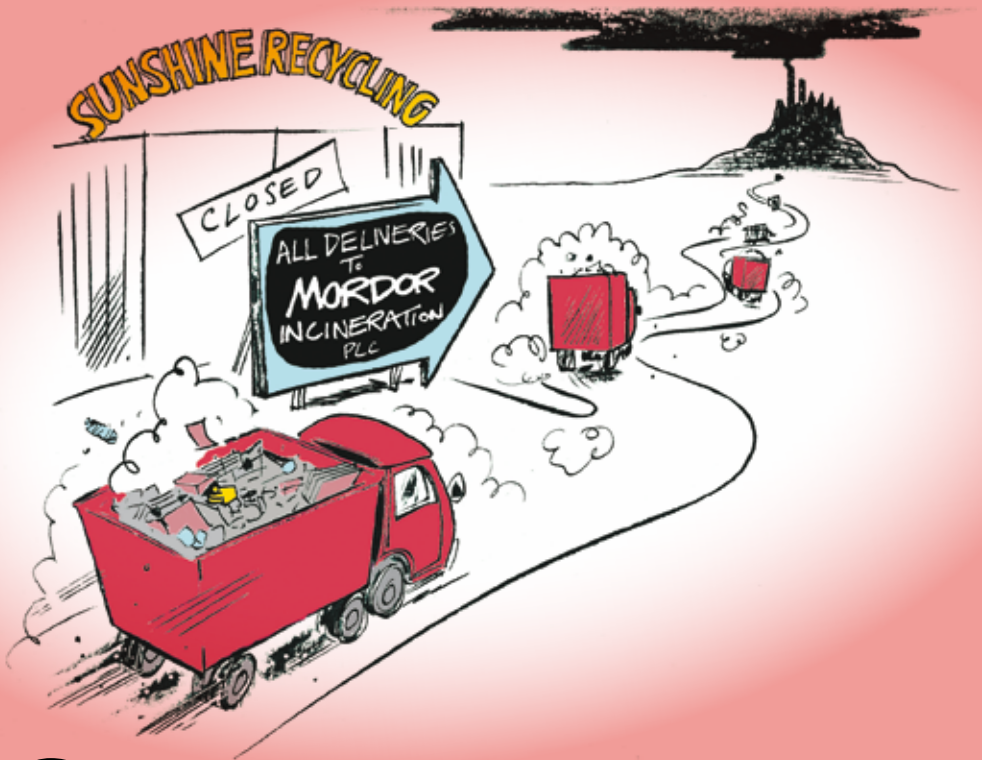




# Incinerator

**CHEATSHEET**



Friends  
of the Earth  
Scotland

**So you don't wanna breathe your rubbish?!**

**We didn't think so!**

**Have a look inside...**

# What is an incinerator?

Incinerators are industrial installations that burn the waste and rubbish that we throw out with our bins everyday. Incinerators can make electricity or produce useful heat and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. These incinerators are often called 'Energy-from-Waste' or 'Waste-to-Energy' plants.

## 'Energy from Waste' sounds good, so what's the problem?

There are lots of problems with incinerators and 'Energy from Waste' facilities:

- They destroy valuable resources that we should be preserving and recycling. Reducing the rubbish we make and recycling more is a better plan of action for Scotland.
- They pollute our air and can be a danger to our health.
- They create toxic ash from the burnt rubbish that needs landfilled.
- They increase the number of trucks on local roads.
- They add to climate change by releasing carbon from waste.
- They lead to less recycling because paper and plastic are needed to keep incinerators burning.
- They waste energy. Recycling plastic can save five times more energy compared with incineration.
- They create fewer jobs than recycling.



## Could my health be affected?

There is no easy or sure answer to this question. Incinerators in the past have had negative effects on the health of the local people. In recent years tough laws from the EU have forced incinerators to clean up but they still release toxic substances.

Many of these substances appear to be safe for humans at low concentrations. It's more difficult however to be sure that there is no danger in the long-term, for example over years or decades of low concentrations.

## Air Pollution

Some of the substances released can cause or worsen breathing problems, for example nitrogen oxides (NOx gases), sulphur oxides (SOx gases), and small dust particles called particulates (PM10 and PM2.5). Other substances like heavy metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are known to have various ill effects on human health.

## Dioxins

Dioxins are a group of highly toxic, cancer-causing chemicals for which there is no safe concentration. It's thought small amounts of dioxins are created as the gas from burnt waste cools. Dioxins are bio-accumulative which means they concentrate in fatty tissues. Because humans are at the top of the food-chain we're likely to receive the highest dose of dioxins.

# What can I do?

## Take Action Now

The government wants local authorities (local councils) to send less waste to landfill sites. This means in the coming years more incinerators will be built in Scotland. See if there's an incinerator in your 'Area Waste Plan' at your local Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) office or online at [www.sepa.org.uk/nws/areas](http://www.sepa.org.uk/nws/areas).

## The Planning System is important

Every local authority (local council) decides in advance what developments will happen in their area. Speak to your local planning office and ask them about the local 'Development Plan'. Find out where you can see the plan, ask if there are consultations on the plan coming up, and if so, how and when you can contribute to make your views known.

## Action on Application

A company must apply to the local authority's planning department for 'planning consent' before building an incinerator and to SEPA for a Pollution, Prevention and Control (PPC) permit before burning any waste. You've the right to have your views considered on both these applications.

## How will I know when an application is submitted?

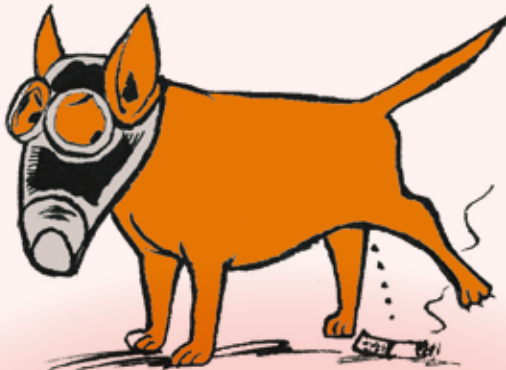
New planning laws mean that people should be told about a big application before it goes in. When it has gone in there will be an advert in the local paper and Edinburgh Gazette, your community council will be told and houses next to the development might get a letter. To have your views considered you must write to the planning department or SEPA before the deadline; normally 28 days after the advert or letter, so not long!

## Good Neighbour Agreements

If your area's incinerator has already got planning permission and a permit to operate you could try a Good Neighbour Agreement. First, the affected community must decide what they want changed. Then approach the incineration company and find an agreement for improvements that can be signed by both parties.

## I need more help!

'Incineration FAQs' are here to help; see the back page for details.



# What's the alternative to incineration?

## The three R's:

### How to waste less waste!

1. **Reduce:** Buying less throwaway products and packaging is the best way to make less waste. Do you really need those individually foil-wrapped biscuits in their hard plastic tray covered again with plastic in a plastic bag?!
2. **Re-use:** The next best way is to re-use the products that we buy through second-hand shops, furniture charities or creativity. Why not consider buying second-hand?
3. **Recycle:** The third best way is to recycle products like plastic, glass, food and metals into new materials. Tomato growers on the Isle of Wight use compost produced from the island's garden and kitchen waste. The only problem is they can't get enough!
4. **The left-over waste:** Zero Waste is the sustainable vision for the future but small-scale Mechanical-Biological Treatment (MBT) could be used for left-over waste today. The treatment is like composting; it doesn't produce compost we can use on our gardens but it does make our left-over waste safer when we do landfill what's left.



## Communities Reducing Excess Waste (CREW)

Join the CREW and become a Waste Prevention Champion!

[www.foe-scotland.org.uk/crew](http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/crew)

## Waste Aware Scotland

For more information on how you can Reduce, Reuse and Recycle your waste visit:

[www.sort-it.org.uk](http://www.sort-it.org.uk)

## Incinerator FAQs

You've just read a CheatSheet, a quick guide to incineration. It's a summary of a bigger guide called '**Incinerator FAQs**'. If you've got more questions or need more details on your health, how incinerators work, Scotland's incineration

future, the law or actions you can take '**Incinerator FAQs**' is for you – FAQ stands for Frequently Asked Questions!

**FREE from:** [www.foe-scotland.org.uk](http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk)  
**£3 in print from:** 0131 554 9977