



Industrial Pollution

CHEATSHEET



**Friends of
the Earth
Scotland**

**Do you want the dirt on
what's safe, and what's not?**

Your Top Five Questions

I live near a factory, what's going on inside?!

At first sight, factories may seem mysterious places. What's going on inside? The easiest way to find out may be to write the company itself or visit with a friend explaining whom you are and what you want to know.

What is pollution?

Unwanted substances in the air, land or water that makes the environment or humans unhealthy could be called pollution. Coloured or smelly pollution is easy to spot but many polluting substances can easily go unnoticed.

Where could pollution come from?

If there is pollution in your local area, the source may not be obvious. The smoke, gas or liquid waste from a few factories may combine to create a pollution problem. With some investigation you may be able to work this out for yourself or you may have to ask the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) for help.

Could a local factory be affecting my health?

This is a difficult question to answer. Many factories release waste (like smoke or sewage) into the environment that could be toxic. To protect our health, tests are used to work out how much of this toxic waste a factory can safely release.

Unfortunately these tests have some problems, especially when dealing with more than one toxic substance and when symptoms take years to develop. We must decide how to balance the health risks against the benefits of using toxic substances in industry.

Who's checking up on the industry?

It's the job of the SEPA to look after the running of Scotland's environmental laws and to make sure all our industries are following them. The most important industrial laws are called the Pollution, Prevention and Control (PPC) regulations.

Industry in Scotland

Industry is vital to Scotland. There are six non-renewable power stations, almost three hundred chemical manufacturing plants, about one-hundred and fifty paper mills, three hundred quarries and over eight thousand factories. These provide jobs, consumer products, and a healthy economy. Industry is essential to our everyday lives but we must not overlook the wider environmental and health impacts.



Finding Out More

Where can I find out about my local factories?

In your local SEPA office library (called a public register) you can see your local industry's Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) files. These files may be difficult to understand but you can get help if you ask. Look out for the following:

- **PPC application** – this tells you how the industry makes its product, what waste will be produced, what health impacts the industry expects and how they are working to reduce these impacts.
- **PPC permit** – this tells you how much pollution the factory may emit by law
- **Environmental monitoring data** – this is a record of pollution released in the past.

There's smoke coming from the factory.

What am I breathing in?

Many factories get rid of waste through chimneys called smokestacks. The PPC files tell you what substances are in the smoke.

What about old industrial sites? Can land pollution affect me?

Industries like oil refineries, the textile industry, mining works and chemical works create the most land pollution. If there is a connection between the land and you, for example you touch the polluted soil or drink water from the ground, toxic substances could reach your body.



There's a pipe pouring liquid into my local river. Is it safe?

Some industries put liquid waste (called effluent) into rivers or lochs. If the effluent is known to be harmful it will be treated before being released into the environment.

In most cases this treatment is successful and the effluent is safe, but good maintenance of the equipment and regular testing of the river is essential. Problems can happen when heavy rains flood the treatment works and untreated waste escapes through overflow drains.

Doing your bit

Industry can damage our health and the environment but it's often the millions of people using household chemicals, wasting energy and creating unnecessary rubbish who create the worst pollution.

You can reduce your pollution impact by using less cleaning chemicals, or even better, eco-friendly alternatives. Reduce the rubbish you create by buying food with less packaging. Recycling means less energy is used creating new products and why not start composting the veggie peelings at home.

What can I do?

I've seen some pollution or smelt a strange smell.

If you suspect there's been a pollution incident, for example there's a strange smell, a chemical spill, broken pipe, off-colour water in the river or even dead fish, phone SEPA's 24-hour Pollution Hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Ask to be told about what happened and what SEPA have done.

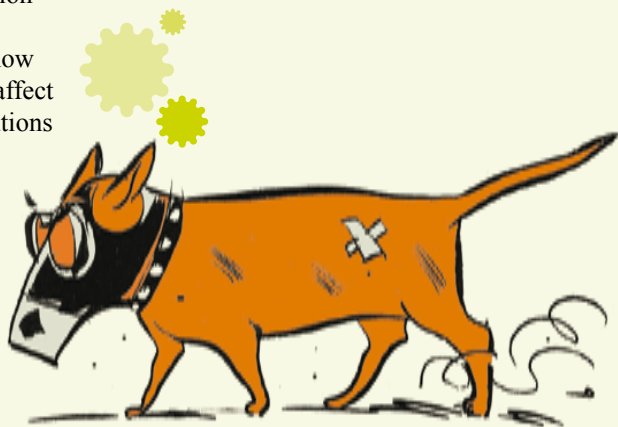
I'm worried about my health and the environment.

If there's another problem with an industry or you're worried about the long-term health effects of pollution you might want more information. Visit SEPA's public registry or the Scottish Pollution Release Inventory website and learn about your local industry. Find out how the substances used in industry can affect your health or learn more about solutions to your local industrial problem.

Contact the industry, SEPA or the council if they're responsible and ask for something to be done. Build up a dialogue and insist that you are kept in the know about what's going on. Date and record the letters you send and the phone calls you make. Listen carefully to any reply but if your problem continues complain again. Get your community and friends involved; the more voices together, the louder you are!

Scottish Pollution Release Inventory

www.sepa.org.uk/spri



Industrial Pollution FAQs

You've just read a CheatSheet, a quick guide to industrial pollution. It's a summary of a bigger guide called 'Industrial Pollution FAQs'. If you've got more questions or need more details on pollution from industry, your health,

Scotland's laws and regulations and what action you can take, '**Industrial Pollution FAQs**' is for you – FAQ stands for Frequently Asked Questions!

FREE from: www.foe-scotland.org.uk
£3 in print from: 0131 554 9977