

# BLUE RIDGE RURAL RECYCLING PROJECT

## NEWS



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### NEW STATE INCINERATION REGULATIONS GIVE LICENSE TO POLLUTERS

The North Carolina Environmental Management Commission Hearings held November 20th in Greensboro were designed to get input from the public on proposed regulations for incinerators of all types. The regulations, NCAC section .1200-CONTROL OF EMISSIONS FROM INCINERATORS, amount to a license for commercially operated, for-profit incineration in a state that will see increasing numbers of incinerator proposals in the 1990's. The "Allowable Emission Rates" in pounds/hour for the following pollutants are as follows:

Arsenic and compounds	0.0051
Beryllium and compounds	0.090
Cadmium and compounds	0.12
Chromium (VI) and compounds	0.0018
Mercury and compounds	0.29

These are rates of emission for municipal solid waste incinerators. *Note that "allowable" mercury emissions are over a quarter pound per hour.* This translates into nearly 7 pounds per day, or 2,540 pounds per year. Mercury is extremely difficult to control even with the best available control technology (BACT). It vaporizes at relatively low temperatures.

A report issued by Clean Water Action in September lists North Carolina as having the 26th highest amount of mercury air emissions from incineration alone. CWA projects an increase of 195% over present levels if planned incinerators are added in this state. North Carolina is already one of 20 states where mercury fish advisories have been issued. If these projections hold, our state will rise from number 26 to number 23 in levels of these toxic emissions in the near future.

Mercury is a potent neurotoxin. Its poisonous effects include personality changes, trembling hands, loose teeth, deafness, and blindness. Elemental mercury is converted to organic mercury by minute organisms in water and sediments, and accumulates and concentrates in algae and plankton. In this way it becomes concentrated in fish and animals or people who eat fish.

*"Approximately 40% of all mercury used in the US is in household batteries. The net effect of incineration is to greatly accelerate the environmental release and biological uptake of mercury contained in discarded materials..."* - CWA Report 9/6/90

The NC Environmental Management Commission will be making its decision on these regulations soon. The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League advocates that no new incinerators be built. Regulations such as these are a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution. The attempt to control emissions does not address the problem of waste.