



**SIERRA
CLUB**
FOUNDED 1892

MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

Massachusetts Sierra Club
10 Milk Street, Boston, MA 02108-4621
(617)423-5775
office@sierraclubmass.org • www.sierraclubmass.org

Incineration Moratorium

Formal Title: An Act to Prohibit the Incineration of Solid Waste

*Sponsors: Rep. Sean Garballey, Sen. Sal DiDomenico
H226/S346*

Like most other states, Massachusetts has had a moratorium on increasing incineration capacity for the past 20 years. The threat to public health posed by the incinerators' emissions was indisputable: incineration produces toxins such as dioxins, furans and other particulates. As a source of energy, burning trash produces more global warming CO₂ than natural gas, oil, or even coal. Current technologies have made little progress in reducing the toxic threat that incineration poses to the state's residents.

However, huge pressure is being exerted by the industry and there are loopholes in the current moratorium. This could open the door for new facilities that would belch toxins, heavy metals, and greenhouse gases. The reasons for our moratorium are still valid today, and now additional concerns are making headlines: depletion of energy and material resources, and climate change.

The EPA requires incinerators "to use the best control technologies," but unfortunately, the best control technology is a poor technology and it is ineffective at removing the toxins from an incinerator's emissions. The health impacts of dioxin include cancer, IQ deficits, disrupted sexual development, birth defects, immune system damage, behavioral disorders, diabetes, and altered sex ratios. Studies show higher cancer rates and the presence of elevated levels of dioxin in the blood of people living near municipal solid waste incinerators.

Incineration destroys resources needed elsewhere. We must conserve our limited resources, not look for new ways to destroy them. Massachusetts already burns 34% of discarded material, destroying these valuable resources for only a miniscule amount of energy, far less than could be saved by recycling those materials. Most of the incinerated waste material could be reused, recycled, or composted, to save energy and resources, and generate new businesses and jobs in collection and processing.

Incineration injures recycling efforts, as it competes for the same waste streams— high BTU paper, cardboard, and plastics. In many places, incineration has capped recycling. Incinerators require a constant high volume of garbage that often requires long-term contracts with municipalities for a specified amount of waste. These contracts destroy incentives for municipalities to reduce and separate waste at the source, and reuse, recycle, and compost.

The newer high-heat conversion technologies, gasification, pyrolysis, and plasma arc, are classified by the EPA as what they are: incineration. But instead of burning garbage directly in a single chamber, they heat waste until it forms a gas that is then combusted as fuel. While incineration companies invest in greenwashing their processes, the differences among them are insignificant.

This bill would make our current administrative moratorium permanent and offer the public better protection from the possibility of a facility being constructed.