

# INDAVER

IRELAND

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Environmental Protection Agency  
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RICHVIEW  
IPC ENFORCEMENT

Environmental Protection Agency  
Waste Licensing  
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Initials \_\_\_\_\_

21st February 2003

Dear Mr Macken,

The long awaited Health Research Report on the health and environmental effects of landfill and incineration was published on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February.

The Health Research Board is a statutory body that promotes, funds, commissions and conducts medical, epidemiological and health services research in Ireland. The Board encourages research that translates into improved diagnosis, understanding, treatment and prevention of disease and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the health services.

The Board, under the direction of the Department of the Environment, has carried out a literature review of worldwide health and environmental research into the effects of landfill and incineration and published its findings in a report entitled "Health and Environmental Effects of Landfilling and Incineration of Waste – a Literature Review". A number of leading academics from Cork and Dublin contributed to this major study.

The findings of this comprehensive study, which has taken 15 months to complete, has given no reason to delay any further the development of modern, integrated waste management infrastructure in Ireland. It is stated on the first page of the report that an integrated waste management approach should be adopted including energy recovery.

Other environmentally aware countries such as, Denmark, Austria, Germany and Switzerland, currently use incineration as part of their waste management systems.

Indaver would encourage the further Research & Development needs identified in the report, including monitoring of the health of people living near waste sites. It is encouraging to note that two of the recommendations in the report have already been acted on.

Extensive baseline environmental information currently exists for dioxins in Ireland, which has been published by the EPA, Food Safety Authority and Cork County Council and dates back to the 1990s. These reports have confirmed the low level of dioxins in the Irish environment, including in the vicinity of incinerators currently operating.

The HRB report also highlights the need for Irish facilities for measuring dioxins. Towards the end of last year the Government provided funding for the development of such a facility in University College, Cork under the direction of Prof JJA Heffron.

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One of the findings of the report was a link between old incinerators and some respiratory symptoms. However, it states that the studies identified relate to older technologies and that with modern facilities the risk of adverse effects diminish. It goes on to state that there is no conclusive link between cancer and living near an incinerator.

The report quotes the United Nations who states that a lack of full scientific certainty about possible health effects should not be used as an excuse to postpone cost effective measures to manage our waste.

According to the authors, although dioxin emissions from incinerators is a concern of many local communities, incinerators account for less than 1% of the dioxin emissions. Accidental fires were found to be the main source of dioxin emissions.

The report also states that waste management is no different to any other human activity, in that all activities have an environmental impact.

Quotations from the HRB Report include:

"In the past, municipal waste incinerators worldwide were major sources of dioxin and other environmental pollutants. However, since the early 1990s, the application of stringent emission limit values to a broad range of environmental pollutants has significantly reduced the environmental impacts of municipal waste incineration."

"A combination of improved combustion practices and staged air-pollution control techniques allows modern municipal incinerators, if operated according to the design standards, to meet the environmental requirements embodied in the recent EC directive on the incineration of waste."

"The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures have had a positive effect on the siting and design of waste management facilities, and there is evidence from Irish research that this has led to improved knowledge and attitudes about incinerator operation and waste management among the service providers."

"Much of the existing evidence on emissions relates to sites operated using older technologies, and may not be directly applicable to more recently constructed facilities"

"As there is a paucity of literature relating to modern landfill and incineration sites, nearly all of the studies identified in this report relate to older technologies. It can be assumed that as emission controls improve, risks of adverse effects diminish"

If you would like a copy of the HRB Report it is available on the HRB Website [www.hrb.ie](http://www.hrb.ie) or directly from their offices at 73 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2, tel: 01-6761176

Kind regards,

*Jackie Keane*

Jackie Keane  
Communications Manager

