

# How does pollution from BRESKO affect Baltimore?

Baltimoreans may know that the waste incinerator operated by Wheelabrator's Baltimore Refuse Energy Systems Co. (BRESKO) is a big polluter. Thirty-six percent of all industrial air pollution in Baltimore comes from BRESKO – the most of any stationary source in the city! But how exactly does this pollution affect our city's public health?

## **BRESKO emits pollutants that are harmful to public health**

BRESKO emits both NO<sub>x</sub> (nitrogen oxides) and PM 2.5 (particulate matter). NO<sub>x</sub> is an air pollutant which, when mixed with volatile organic compounds and sunlight, helps create ozone pollution. PM 2.5 is also an air pollutant; it forms through the mixture of solid and liquid particles in the air. Both pollutants are potentially harmful for human health. Ozone, the product of NO<sub>x</sub>, VOCs, and sunlight, can cause chest pain, coughing, and throat irritation. PM 2.5 can cause lung damage, increased risk of heart attack, and increased risk of mortality. Estimates from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation suggest that around \$55 million dollars a year are spent treating the human health consequences of BRESKO's operation.



The BRESKO incinerator



## **Pollution from BRESKO disproportionately affects low-income and Black communities**

In a clear case of environmental injustice, Baltimore's most economically and socially vulnerable neighborhoods are more affected by air pollution from sources like BRESKO than Baltimore's wealthy neighborhoods. BRESKO is located in South Baltimore among predominantly low-income and Black communities. The combination of BRESKO with pollution from car and truck traffic has proven to be a toxic mix. South Baltimore is unfortunately home to some of the most polluted air in Baltimore City. As a result of this, South Baltimore has the highest hospitalization rates for asthma. The communities closest to BRESKO also suffer lower levels of education and lower life expectancies. This all means that the communities BRESKO affects most directly are also the communities least able to manage the health damages that BRESKO causes.

## What YOU can do:

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Right now, the BRESKO incinerator receives public subsidies for trash incineration. This is because Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard designates trash incineration as a Tier 1 form of renewable energy – on par with wind and solar!

However, Maryland's General Assembly will be voting on the Clean Energy Jobs Act this legislative session. If passed, this bill will remove public subsidies for trash incinerators like BRESKO and direct more money toward the development of clean energy like wind and solar in our state.

Maryland should NOT be subsidizing this harmful energy source. Passing the Clean Energy Jobs Act would allow the state to direct more funds to wind and solar, and other energy sources that are *truly* clean.

**Please support the Clean Energy Jobs Act for a cleaner, greener Maryland!**

**For more info** visit [ccanactionfund.org/maryland/fighting-toxic-incinerators/](http://ccanactionfund.org/maryland/fighting-toxic-incinerators/)

### REFERENCES

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