



Waste incineration — pros and cons

Preliminary information:

Incineration (also called heat treatment) is used to convert municipal solid waste into residues (ash) and gaseous products. It is carried out both in people's homes and in industrial enterprises and in agricultural activity:

- Households burn waste in order not to pay for its removal. In winter, the burning of waste in the stove contributes to the home heating.
- Incineration of industrial waste in industrial enterprises is mostly related to non-payment of significant funds for their transportation and treatment.
- The burning of stubble (dry grass, straw and other vegetation) eliminates the need for hard and prolonged labor to clear the field and prepare it for subsequent agricultural activities.

Arguments in favor of waste incineration:

- Incineration of waste reduces its quantity by up to 20-30 percent of its original volume, thereby relieving pressure on landfills where it would otherwise be disposed.
- Combustion is a natural process widespread in nature. All living organisms, including humans, live thanks to combustion processes occurring in living organisms. Therefore, waste incineration should not be a threat to the environment.
- Incineration of household waste is a type of recycling, because unlike the regular recycling process, where raw materials and materials are extracted, in this case energy is obtained. The process can be defined as "energy recycling".

Arguments against waste incineration:

- Combustion of waste is the cause of releasing into the air significant amounts of sulfur and nitrogen oxides, hydrogen chloride, dioxins, heavy metals, as well as carbon dioxide, which is a greenhouse gas.
- The burning of waste containing artificial materials, chemicals, medicines, glues, paints, etc. is particularly dangerous. In this way, as a result of the burning, dangerous chemical compounds (including dioxins) fall into the air. These gases are poisonous and can cause malignant diseases. The resulting ash is often highly toxic and must be buried under special conditions to avoid soil contamination.

- Stubble burning causes the death of animals and microorganisms. The soil loses its fertility and easily erodes. There is a real danger of fires starting and spreading quickly. The underground waters are at risk of contamination.

Varying viewpoints



Local authority representative:

The monitoring of the atmospheric air purity too often register seriously pollutants exceeding the norms. We must take measures to improve the state of the environment.



Manager of a furniture manufacturing enterprise:

Waste removal and treatment fees have risen significantly in recent years. By burning waste, we reduce our costs.



Worker in the furniture manufacturing enterprise:

I carry out the orders of the bosses. True, it is not quite right to burn waste that smells and pollutes — who knows what their content is... But I am only a worker.



Farmer:

After each agricultural season, I burn the stubble – this is how I get rid of weeds, diseases. It's a quick and cheap way that frees me from having to do the hard work of getting the fields ready for next season.



A resident of the settlement who burns waste in a stove:

My trash can doesn't hold all the trash that litters my home. Burning in the stove, especially in winter, contributes to the heating of my home. And too often I can rely on waste from the furniture manufacturing enterprise – it is much more calorific.



Neighbor #1:

My neighbor is burning something in his stove. I have to close my windows because – there are thick balls of smoke coming out of his chimney. This is a real disgrace! I tried to talk to him several times, but no result. He tells me not to stick my nose in other people’s affairs.



Neighbor #2:

My neighbor often burns his garbage in his stove. However, I do not wish to enter into quarrel with him and spoil our relations.



Representative of an environmental organization:

Burning stubble and industrial waste is illegal. And the fact that some people prefer to warm themselves by burning their household waste in the stove is not the right way to treat them. Not only because the air is being poisoned, but also a large amount of greenhouse gases are being released into the atmosphere. The health service warns about increased levels of lung and other diseases.