

Covanta Incinerator Plant in Chester, Pennsylvania

Problem: The majority low-income Black and Brown residents of Chester, Pennsylvania experience significant adverse effects on health and quality of life from the pollution released by one of the largest trash incinerator in the country (Covanta), a sewage waste treatment facility, chemical manufacturing plants, and other polluting industries located in this historic city on the Delaware River.

Background: Chester has more than 32,500 residents, mostly Black people struggling with poverty who could not leave when the factories left town. The Covanta incinerator has been located in Chester since 1992; it was cited in 2019 as one of the largest polluters of its kind in the country. Incinerators and toxic waste companies often target low-income areas and communities of color because they are seen as the path of least resistance. Communities like Chester become “sacrifice zones.”



Covanta’s incinerator burns nearly 3,500 tons of trash and industrial waste each day in a densely populated Black community. The pollutants released include dioxins, nitrogen oxide, particulate matter, and more—all of which have serious health consequences.

A third of the children in Chester have asthma and that is nearly five times the national average. A quarter of the town’s adults also have asthma. Furthermore, Chester residents are significantly more likely to develop lung cancer and ovarian cancer and die from a stroke or heart disease than other Delaware County residents.

Current Status: Local environmental activists are demanding an end to toxic trash incineration at the Covanta facility, increased emission standards for other polluters along the Delaware River, and opportunities for clean, green jobs for residents.

Local Advocates: Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living (CRCQL) has led the environmental justice movement for clean air in Chester City since 1992.

Advocacy Needed Now: Demand that Covanta meet environmental standards for air pollution.



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Resources

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1. [Covanta incinerator in Chester faces environmental racism claims - WHYY](#)
2. [Links & Resources - Chester Residents](#)
3. [Parker: Environmental Support for Chester](#)
4. [Video Trashed: The Secret Life of Plastic Recycling - ABC News](#)