

2/16/05

EXHIBIT 12  
DATE 2-16-05  
HB 582

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Linda Smith. I am speaking as a citizen long concerned about improving air quality in the Missoula Valley.

Burning polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic releases chlorine, a highly toxic pollutant whose byproducts are released as tiny particles of dioxins and furans that are linked to a number of serious health concerns including lung disease, reproductive and kidney failure, birth defects and cancer.

Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE) worked hard with Smurfit-Stone Container mill in the 90's to phase out the use of chlorine in the bleaching process used to make liner board. Now PVC is in the plastic reject material, the tape and twine, that is used to bundle the recycled cardboard the mill imports to make liner board. Importing the used cardboard to reuse in making liner board saves energy by not having to use as much raw material and is a great example of volume recycling.

There are options about what to do with the plastic reject material. Burning the plastic releases particles that are extremely hazardous to health. Putting it in the landfill until a better solution emerges is the solution that best expresses a company's commitment to having the least impact on the surrounding community's health.

Smurfit-Stone, located in Missoula, has a permit to burn 15 tons of plastic every day which includes 3/4ths of a ton or 15,000 lbs per day of PVC plastic. When you convert tons to pounds that's 30,000 lbs per day of plastic that can be burned. In a year it's 10,950,000 lbs of plastic being burned; of that 547,500 lbs, or over half a million pounds in a year, can be from PVC plastic.

Waste disposal through incineration of toxic materials is extremely hazardous to the public's health and cannot in good conscience be classified as recycling.

I'm reminded of reading last Sunday's in-depth Missoulian article about the impacts of W. R. Grace's vermiculite/asbestos operation on the people of Libby. What came out of W. R. Grace's smoke stacks in Libby sifted out over the town causing serious health consequences many years later. There's no compelling reason to take that chance in these times.

I've lived in Missoula almost 30 years and occasionally get a whiff of Smurfit-Stone's emissions in my neighborhood. I don't feel like I can as freely exercise outdoors knowing the burning of plastic goes on every day. And I worry about the lung capacity development of children growing up in Missoula and about their future health.

We can prevent these kinds of drastic health consequences and prevent citizen lawsuits filed to protect public health and well-being by passing HB 582 to eliminate incineration as an acceptable method of toxic waste disposal or recycling.

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