

Sample email - Feel free to make this your own!

Dear Council Member _____,

I am sending you this letter to express my support to close the incinerator by the end of the Covanta/Reworld contract of April 2026. As the largest stationary pollutant in the county, the incinerator needs to be closed to improve the environment and health. For materials that cannot be recycled or reused, a landfill (for waste) and compost (for organics) are the best solutions for the county, and the most effective paths to a greener and healthier county.

Incineration is worse than landfilling for three reasons. The process of burning waste like non-recycled plastics, wood and metals emits multiple types of air toxins that threaten our residents, aquatic life, land and water. Burning trash also creates greenhouse gasses primarily from burning organics like food, paper and wood: the Montgomery County incinerator is the largest stationary source of air polluting carbon dioxide in the county. Finally, the resulting by-products from burning waste is a highly toxic ash that we have been dumping on a densely populated minority community in Henrico County, Virginia for the past 29 years.

In 2020, the incinerator burned approximately 547,000 tons of waste. Our county's incinerator is the largest single source of greenhouse gasses (CO₂, methane, and nitrous oxide), and the county's second largest source of lead emissions. A life cycle assessment conducted for Montgomery County using a peer-reviewed analytical tool that has been employed in multiple U.S. waste management districts found that the health and environmental consequences of waste incineration are more than three times worse than sending waste directly to landfills, where waste is more contained. Even with trucking or rail hauling our trash out of state to a landfill, our emissions will still be more than 1/3 less than continuing to burn in the county.

For residual waste that cannot be recycled or reused, the County can deliver it to a well-managed pre-existing landfill, thus providing the residents of Montgomery County and the out-of-state receiving community with a much safer, healthier, cleaner and environmentally just solution. This strategy eliminates the need to dump toxic ash in a densely populated Virginia community.

Please tell the County Executive you want the incinerator closed now, concurrently with building an organics composting facility and other zero waste strategies. It is unsafe and more expensive when health and environmental costs are monetized to continue to burn our trash while he implements these other solutions as he is proposing.