

Green businesses and cities at risk: How your waste management plan may be leading you in the wrong direction

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Businesses that attempt to meet sustainability goals through programs like “waste-to-energy,” “zero waste to landfill,” or “refuse derived fuel” undermine their own intentions by burning up valuable resources in polluting processes. The practice of burning waste using co-incineration in cement kilns and boilers has recently become more dangerous. A 2013 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency loophole made it easier to burn waste in non-incinerator combustion facilities with weaker emission regulations and reporting requirements. Business and cities should be aware that burning waste in any form and by any name is a false path to zero waste, and undermines true sustainability goals. Many companies are already shifting to better waste management practices and choosing better products and packaging, with subsequent cost savings and revenue increases. This report addresses the problems with burning waste, and recommends that businesses pursue true zero waste strategies and sustainability goals.

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