



Why is Trash Collection So Expensive in Minnesota?

Incinerators Make Minnesota an Outlier in the Midwest and in the Nation

- Minnesota has the third highest number of trash-burning incinerators in the country.
- The average incinerator tip fee in the United State is \$65.63 – Minnesota is 27 percent higher at \$83.20 (second most expensive in the country).
- The average landfill tip fee in the United States is \$63.26 – Minnesota is slightly lower at \$61.67.
- Minnesota's tip fee for incinerators is 35 percent higher than its tip fee for landfills – this is the largest difference of any state in the country.
- The tip fees for the Twin Cities' metro area incinerators are even higher than the state average – the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) tip fee is \$90/ton, and the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Center tip fee is \$87/ton (and set to increase to \$103/ton next year).

Facts on Trash-Burning Incinerators

- One megawatt-hour of power generated from trash costs \$8.33 compared to only \$4.25 for pulverized coal and \$2.04 for nuclear.
- For every 10,000 tons of waste sent to an incinerator, only 1.2 jobs are created compared to 4.1 full-time jobs at composting facilities and 2.1 full-time jobs at landfills (where some use advanced technologies to turn captured methane gas into energy).

- Incinerators pollute the air with toxins like mercury, lead, and nitrogen oxide. More recently, it appears incinerators are releasing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly referred to as PFAS. Communities close to trash incinerators are exposed to six times more mercury per unit of energy generated than coal plants.

Why are Costs Skyrocketing in Minnesota?

Government is trying to control all aspects and driving costs up for consumers.

Drivers to the extremely high costs include:

- The “waste hierarchy” - providing preferential treatment to trash taken to incinerators and treating incineration as “renewable” energy like solar and wind.
- The “restriction on disposal” – haulers cannot take waste to landfills unless every incinerator and processor is full – meaning more trucks on the roads, driving greater distances.
- The “flow control” – in Ramsey/Washington Counties, all trash must be delivered to a designated location – the counties-owned center in Newport; once the trash is processed in Newport, it is then hauled to Mankato (90 miles) or Red Wing (40 miles).
- Tax rates are extremely high – government has an incentive to subsidize the incinerators and processors; the increased costs mean more revenue for the counties.
- In 2019, Ramsey/Washington Counties lobbied state legislators to include \$21 million in the bonding bill (typically for infrastructure projects) for their processor, the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Center, and ultimately received \$7 million in the bonding bill that was passed in 2020.
- Since 2016, Ramsey/Washington Counties have spent \$82 million on the Recycling & Energy Center (purchased the privately-owned plant for \$24 million in 2016, another \$15 million on various improvements, and most recently, \$43 million in investments in as organic recycling operation); over this time period, the tip fees have increased nearly 50 percent (from \$70/ton in 2017 to \$103/ton in 2023).
- In Ramsey County, the residential tax rate for garbage is 28 percent and the non-residential tax rate is 53 percent. The state tax rate for residential is 9.75 percent and for commercial, 17 percent. For example, churches and schools in Ramsey County are taxed at 70 percent.