**Frequently Asked Questions – Kiveton Park Waste Fire**

**1. Will the Environment Agency or any other agency be taking legal action against the owners of the site for allowing the deposit and burning of the waste?**

The waste was originally deposited in 2014 under license of an Environmental Permit. When the operator of this permit failed to comply with its conditions, the Environment Agency took legal action in July 2018, by revoking the permit to stop further waste deposits. In November 2018 the operator went into liquidation, resulting in the site becoming an Illegal Waste Site and preventing further legal action against them.

The site is now under different ownership to that in 2018, and the Environment Agency is investigating recent activities. If anyone has any information, please contact the Environment Agency’s 24/7 Incident Communication Service (ICS) hotline on 0800 807060.

The waste was originally deposited under license of an Environmental Permit which was issued in June 2014. In 2015 we issued two enforcement notices to the operator, to secure compliance with the permit. Neither notice was complied with by the operator. In September 2017 the Environment Agency issued a revocation notice to stop further waste deposits. This was appealed by the operator but, after a hearing, the Planning Inspectorate dismissed the appeal in June 2018. In November 2018 the operator went into liquidation. This prevented the Environment Agency taking further legal action against them and resulted in the site becoming an Illegal Waste Site.

The site is now under different ownership to that in 2018, and the Environment Agency is investigating more recent activities. If anyone has any information, please contact the Environment Agency’s 24/7 Incident Communication Service (ICS) hotline on 0800 807060.

**2. Will there be any monitoring of air pollution from the fire?**

The Environment Agency have been using an external air quality monitoring unit close to the site and this is due to be moved to a downwind location off-site closer to residential properties. This unit will measure the concentration of various products of combustion in the air on a day-to-day basis and over the longer-term. The data recorded by the unit will be shared with Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the UK Health Security Agency. The latest air quality monitoring update and public advice is provided on the incident website below which will be updated as more results become available [http://www.syfire.gov.uk/incidents/kiveton-park-incident-latest/](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.syfire.gov.uk%2Fincidents%2Fkiveton-park-incident-latest%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEMDcorrespondence%40environment-agency.gov.uk%7Ccc9cb9ac248740d71c4e08dad1fba7d1%7C770a245002274c6290c74e38537f1102%7C0%7C0%7C638053176034703558%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=F0zrJbegR2x34oqFKW30Hnq06nUUGtiPfVfvrtBeMWA%3D&reserved=0)

**3. Who is regulating what is being stored on these premises and how the waste is dealt with?**

The waste stored at the site is being stored illegally and is unregulated. When it was originally deposited in 2014, this was done under license of an Environmental Permit which was regulated by the Environment Agency. When the operator went into liquidation, in November 2018, the site becoming an Illegal Waste Site.

The current waste fire is being dealt with via the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum with input from the Environment Agency, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, UK Health Security Agency, and the Police.

It is the Environment Agency’s expectation that the current site occupier or landowner will take responsibility for and deal with the removal of the waste from the site.

**4. Is asbestos-containing material present in the warehouse roof and how will it be dealt with?**

The South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum are aware of the risk of cement-bonded asbestos in the roof panels. Firefighting is progressing in such a way as to not break up or dismantle these materials. We will continue assessing and addressing any asbestos contamination in the waste once the fire is extinguished, as well as managing material on-site and any on-site risks to our staff while the firefighting is carried out. On site sampling for asbestos fibres on operators and equipment recorded no asbestos present and wider community fibre sampling demonstrated no concerns of asbestos fibres being present. There is no evidence of asbestos leaving the site or posing a wider risk to the public.

**5. Are you able to confirm what the plan is for the future of this rubbish and if the regulatory agencies have a strategy to prevent such sites as this and the tyre dump at Ranskill from causing problems in the future?**

The immediate priority is to put the fire out and then to have the waste removed from site. The Environment Agency has no duty and no funding to clear illegal waste sites. This remains the responsibility of the site occupier and landowner and we will be taking all action possible to get them to do this. Unfortunately, they have taken no steps to do this so far.

**6. Will the company responsible for the disgraceful problem be made to pay the full costs arising from their negligent management?**

Please refer to our response in question 1. The Environment Agency took appropriate enforcement action against the company that originally brought the waste to the site and successfully revoked its environmental permit to operate in 2018 following a legal appeal. That company subsequently went into liquidation and no longer exists. We are currently investigating whether the current owners and operators of the site have committed any new offences which have led to the recent fires.

**7. Will there be a full clean-up of the site, and the permanent removal of residual waste?**

The Environment Agency has no duty and no funding to clear illegal waste sites. This remains the responsibility of the site occupier and landowner. Since the waste was first deposited in 2014 the site occupier, land leasee and landowner have changed, and two companies are now in liquidation. This complicates the process for achieving clearance of this site.

**8.** **Why is the fire taking so long to put out?**

Waste fires like the one at Kiveton are very complex and unlike the more common types of fire we deal with. The waste in question is tightly compacted in very large piles. The fires are starting by themselves, deep within these piles, and then smouldering indefinitely.

Simply applying water as we would normally do will have no effect, as it will just run off the surface and never reach the deep-seated heat within the piles of waste. Indeed, the top layer of waste almost forms a ‘protective shield’ around the fire.

For the Fire Service to extinguish this fire we need to break up the waste and move it into smaller piles, so we can apply water to the hot spots. Unfortunately, we cannot do this by hand. The waste is so tightly compacted that it is almost like concrete in terms of strength.

Therefore, our colleagues at the Environment Agency have brought in heavy plant machinery to break up the waste for us, so we can apply water to the fire and get it extinguished. Given the volume of waste at this site, this is not a quick job, and will take some time to do.

**9) People are experiencing sore throats and breathing problems – surely there is a health risk?**

Some of the substances in smoke can irritate the lining of the nose, throat, and lungs, the skin, and the eyes. Symptoms may include coughing and wheezing, sore throat, feeling short of breath, runny nose or eyes or chest pain. These symptoms usually disappear after the exposure has stopped and do not lead to any long-term health problems.

People who are generally fit and well are unlikely to experience long-term health problems from temporary exposure to smoke from a fire. However, anyone can be affected by smoke, and exposure to smoke is more likely to affect people who already have breathing problems or heart or lung conditions (such as heart disease, bronchitis, asthma, or chronic pulmonary disease). The very young and very old, smokers and people with flu or flu-like illnesses may also be at greater risk from exposure to smoke from fires.

Until the fire is extinguished, UKHSA advise that people should take steps to limit their exposure to smoke by avoiding outside areas affected by smoke or limiting the time spent in them. Residents in areas affected by smoke should stay indoors and keep their doors and windows closed. Weather forecasts and summaries of planned activities on site are being regularly updated on the incident website [http://www.syfire.gov.uk/incidents/kiveton-park-incident-latest/](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.syfire.gov.uk%2Fincidents%2Fkiveton-park-incident-latest%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEMDcorrespondence%40environment-agency.gov.uk%7Ccc9cb9ac248740d71c4e08dad1fba7d1%7C770a245002274c6290c74e38537f1102%7C0%7C0%7C638053176034703558%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=F0zrJbegR2x34oqFKW30Hnq06nUUGtiPfVfvrtBeMWA%3D&reserved=0) to help residents identify times when their properties may be downwind and affected by smoke. When properties are upwind, residents are advised to take the chance to ventilate their properties.

If you have symptoms that persist, seek medical advice by calling NHS 111 or by contacting your GP. If a medical consultant is already treating an existing health condition, discuss your concerns and symptoms with them. In the case of an emergency call 999.

The human nose is very sensitive to odours and often detects odorous chemicals at concentrations in air which pose no risk to health. Chronic environmental odours can be unpleasant and affect people’s wellbeing. Please continue to report environmental and amenity issues to the Environment Agency’s 24/7 Incident Communication Service (ICS) hotline on 0800 807060. This helps the responding agencies identify times when smoke is causing community impacts and review the approach on site as they work to extinguish the fire and resolve community impacts from smoke.

**10) Is my risk of cancer higher because of exposure to smoke from the fire?**

The UKHSA will assess the results of longer-term air quality monitoring when they become available in order to carry out a detailed risk assessment.

However, when considering carcinogens (cancer causing agents), it is generally accepted that long-term exposure is necessary to produce measurable health effects in populations. Much of what we know about the carcinogenicity of chemicals is derived from studies of long-term exposure in occupational settings (often for years) and from studies of life-time exposures of experimental animals. Short-lived exposures to chemicals present in smoke are not likely to lead to detectable increases in cancers in exposed populations, particularly those who have minimized their exposure by sheltering.