

MERCURY UPDATE

August 04 issue 2

The following email was received from the OSPAR Secretariat on Monday 16th August 2004:

Dear Mr Morris,

I refer to your e-mail to the OSPAR Secretariat 6 August and apologise for this late reply.

You ask: Is the United Kingdom Government committed to achieving total cessation of emissions of mercury by the year 2020.

The answer is yes:

OSPAR Contracting Parties are legally bound by the OSPAR Convention's general objective to prevent and eliminate pollution. They are also legally bound by the decisions adopted by the Commission. Some of these relate specifically to emissions of mercury from different sources.

OSPAR Contracting Parties are committed to the cessation target as described in the OSPAR Hazardous Substances strategy. This includes mercury. Cf. OSPAR Hazardous Substances Strategy paragraph 1.1 (In accordance with the general objective, the objective of the Commission with regard to hazardous substances is to prevent pollution of the maritime area by continuously reducing discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances, with the ultimate aim of achieving concentrations in the marine environment near background values for naturally occurring substances and close to zero for man-made synthetic substances) and 4.1 (The Commission will implement this strategy progressively by making every endeavour to move towards the target of the cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances by the year 2020).

The UK is lead country within OSPAR for mercury. I therefore suggest you contact them directly if you need information about the UK implementation of the Hazardous Substances Strategy and OSPAR measures on mercury.

EU member states are furthermore bound by the cessation target for priority substances in the Water Framework Directive. This also includes mercury.

Yours sincerely,
Hanne-Grete Nilsen

The Institute's Board is pleased to have received the above answer to this vital question directly from OSPAR which has implications on the decision making process on whether to upgrade or 'trade'.

The response to this question received from DEFRA at a meeting in March 04 was that there can be no guarantees.

It is of significant importance to smaller crematoria when evaluating the risk of initially paying to pollute and paying again pre 2020 to meet the total cessation target.

See the OSPAR website for comprehensive documentation on the agreement.

This bulletin may be copied to your Chief Executive, Environmental Health Department, Managing Director, Committee Chairman or any other interested person