

Stop Trashing Our Air Act: Will Ending Philly's Use of Incineration Cost More?

- Prices in the current contracts with Waste Management (WM) for landfilling and Reworld (Covanta) for incineration and ash landfilling about the same.
- Incineration is generally more expensive than landfilling, but using landfills further from the city could cost a bit more due to increased trucking distance.
- The Department of Sanitation says ending use of incineration could cost \$6.5 million more per year, which is just 0.1% of the Philadelphia City Budget.
- The city has a record \$1.19 Billion budget surplus.
- The public health and environmental savings are 3.7 times greater than the potential increased cost in waste disposal services.

The per-ton 2019 prices in the current contracts are as follows:

Reworld (incineration):¹

58 th St Transfer Station:	\$65.50 for first 120,000 tons per year, then \$64
Chester Incinerator:	\$58.50 by transfer trailer; \$57 by compactor truck
Plymouth Incinerator:	\$63.50 by transfer trailer; \$59 by compactor truck
Residual waste:	\$65.50

WM (landfilling):²

\$65.25

Same prices for delivery to the two transfer stations in the city (Philadelphia Transfer Facility and Recycling Center and the Forge Transfer Facility) or directly to Fairless Landfill or Wheelabrator Falls incinerator, both in Falls Township, Bucks County.

With inflation built into the contracts, the rates now average \$79.91/ton as of January 2026.³

The Sanitation Department has raised concerns that if incineration is prohibited, landfill companies can raise the amount they bid for the city's waste disposal contracts.

However, the world's largest waste corporation, Waste Management (now just called 'WM') has the larger of two city disposal contracts issued in 2012 and 2019. They handle 70% of the city-collected trash, and they have no competitor able to handle that volume. So, 70% of the city's waste contracting is already given to a monopoly that has been able to name its price for years. The only issue is whether reduced competition for the other 30% will significantly increase costs.

Sanitation Commissioner Crystal Jacobs Shipman testified at the 11/17/2025 hearing on the Stop Trashing Our Air Act that the bill's potential costs are another \$6.5 million per year,⁴ which is just 0.1% of our city's \$6.8 billion operating budget.⁵ The city has a record \$1.19 billion *surplus*.⁶

The \$6.5 million estimate is attributed, in part, to increased trucking. However, the city's trucking costs should only be reduced, since Republic has two transfer stations within the city and some of the city's waste is currently being hauled directly to Reworld's incinerators in the suburbs.

If accurate, \$6.5 million per year is a good deal, as it's much less than the cost of health and environmental harms caused by burning 180,000 tons of Philly trash per year.

The harm reduction from ending incineration of Philly's trash totals \$24 million per year:⁷

- \$5.9 million in avoided climate change impacts, plus
- \$18.3 million in other avoided public health and environmental damage, much of which is local impacts such as asthma, cancer, heart attacks, and strokes.

For more information, contact Mike Ewall at 215-436-9511 or mike@energyjustice.net or visit www.PhillyZeroWaste.org



Reworld Delaware Valley incinerator in Chester

¹ Current Philadelphia City waste disposal contract with Covanta (2019-2026): <https://phillyzerowaste.org/contract/2019CovantaContract.pdf>

² Current Philadelphia City waste disposal contract with Waste Management (2019-2026): <https://phillyzerowaste.org/contract/2019WMContract.pdf>

³ Per Scott McGrath, Phila. Sanitation Department's Environmental Planning Director at 1/15/2026 Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee Meeting.

⁴ Committee on the Environment Hearing on Stop Trashing Our Air Act, November 17, 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jznk8bARW6s&t=6046s>

⁵ Philadelphia Office of the Mayor, "City of Philadelphia Approves \$6.8 Billion 'One Philly 2.0' FY26 Budget," June 12, 2025.

<https://www.phila.gov/2025-06-12-city-of-philadelphia-approves-6-8-billion-one-philly-2-0-fy26-budget/>

⁶ Philadelphia Director of Finance, "City of Philadelphia Achieves Record \$1.19 Billion Fund Balance Amid Unprecedented Fiscal Uncertainty," Oct. 29, 2025.

<https://www.phila.gov/2025-10-28-city-of-philadelphia-achieves-record-1-19-billion-fund-balance-amid-unprecedented-fiscal-uncertainty/>

⁷ Delaware County Life Cycle Assessment of Incineration vs. Landfilling, June 2023. See overview and summary charts at

<http://www.phillyzerowaste.org/LCA.pdf> and the full study at <https://energyjustice.net/incineration/DelcoLCA.pdf>