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HBN Response to Vinyl Institute Statement on USGBC PVC report

The Vinyl Institute's press statement on the US Green Building Council's recent report on PVC ends with an attack by president Tim Burns, stating that *"The fact is that landfill fires are extremely rare in the United States, and the burning of waste at construction sites is outlawed in most jurisdictions, so this is largely a non-issue."*

This claim further strains the Vinyl Institute's data credibility. According to the U.S. Fire Administration: "each year in the United States an average of 8,400 dump and landfill fires are reported to the fire service... Undoubtedly, some landfill fires go unreported because they burned undetected or were on private property and extinguished by the landfill operator." (U.S. Fire Administration "Landfill Fires Their Magnitude, Characteristics, and Mitigation", May 2002/FA-225 <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-225.pdf>)

An average of 23 landfill fires a day hardly constitutes a non issue. Factor in that some of these fires burn for days or months before they can be extinguished and one can begin to understand the magnitude of the problem. Smoldering underground fires that create the best conditions for dioxin generation are also the hardest to detect and extinguish and can burn for months or years.

In regards to the waste burning issue, the TSAC report calculations on dioxin from burn barrels already shares the Vinyl Institute assumption that barrel burns are rare. TSAC assumed that only 0.2% of all PVC waste is barrel burned based on a 2000 EPA waste characterization).

The landfill fire dioxin releases are the important driver in the TSAC calculations on end of life burning estimated to be about an order of magnitude higher per kg of waste. Debating barrel burns will not fundamentally change the TSAC conclusions.

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