

AQ10(07) Additional Guidance from Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government - April 2007

Crematoria: burden sharing update

Press Notice Re-Issue

As a result of a query from a local authority, we realise that not all authorities will necessarily be aware of the press notice the Department issued last October about continuation of the burden sharing approach for mercury emissions from crematoria. The press notice is set out in full below.

Archive Press Notice from October 2006: halving mercury emissions from crematoria – novel burden sharing approach to continue

An innovative approach by Government and the cremation sector for reducing the amount of mercury emitted by crematoria has been a success so far and should be allowed to continue, Environment Minister Ben Bradshaw confirmed today.

The experimental 'burden sharing' approach is based on the fact that the Government's target for cutting the amount of mercury emitted into the environment can be met without the need for all crematoria to fit specialist abatement equipment. To allay concerns about unfairness, Defra has allowed the sector to achieve the cuts by sharing the costs between operators who fit the equipment and those who do not.

Ben Bradshaw said:

"The success so far of this flexible approach is due in no small part to the levels of co-operation within the sector and the commitment of some key players to making the system effective. I congratulate them for that, and the Federation of British Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society for the leadership they have shown, particularly with the CAMEO scheme.

“Certainly burden sharing seems to be working, and I am persuaded that it would be sensible to continue with it so long as it keeps showing it can deliver.”

Mercury is toxic, accumulates in the air and water, and can harm the brain, kidneys, nervous system and unborn children. Up to 16% of all mercury emitted in the UK comes from crematoria because of the fillings in teeth and this percentage is expected to increase to 25% by 2020 without action.

The aim in the UK is to cut emissions of mercury from crematoria by half by the end of 2012. This figure was determined after extensive consultation to achieve a balance between costs to the sector and environmental benefits.

National, rather than local, targets apply to the reduction of mercury because emissions from specific crematoria do not impact on the immediate vicinity, but affect health via the food chain, particularly when they are then deposited in water and taken up by fish.

Should burden sharing prove not to be viable, Defra has stated that it will revert to the more conventional approach of securing the 50% reduction by requiring all crematoria above a certain size to fit mercury abatement, with exceptions where installation is demonstrably impossible because of space constraints or heritage considerations.

Notes to editors

1. Emissions of mercury from all sources have decreased by 89% from 1970 to 2004. They are expected to reduce further up to 2020 as a result of other measures. The increase in crematoria emissions is caused by a generation which is more likely to have retained all its teeth, but has more fillings because it did not benefit from advances in oral hygiene.
2. All new crematoria are required to fit mercury control equipment but those conducting fewer than 750 cremations a year have till 2012 to do this.
3. Under burden sharing, crematoria operators can choose whether to fit mercury abatement equipment or contribute to the costs of others doing so. Many operators have joined the CAMEO scheme, which is arranging burden sharing at the national level and provides an umbrella organisation for both running the system and reporting to

Defra. CAMEO will register all burden sharing arrangements, with CAMEO members being free to choose their burden sharing partners. CAMEO will recommending a surcharge from members from January 2007. Redistribution will take place in due course. Other operators are making their own arrangements, either by fitting equipment to part of their crematorium, or coming to a private agreement with other crematoria.

4. Local authorities regulate crematoria under the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations 2000 (PPC). Considerable improvements were made to crematoria emissions under the previous Environmental Protection Act 1990 which PPC replaced. Defra expects local authority PPC regulators to impose conditions in PPC permits so as to give formal effect to the decisions of each crematorium to either fit abatement or contribute financially to others.
5. The improvements in mercury abatement are expected to put between £25 and £30 on the cost of a funeral by cremation. The Office of Fair Trading's 2001 report put the average cost of a funeral at £1215 for cremation and £2048 for burial:
<http://www.offt.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/084B6929-252B-4988-BAF8-EF810FD440D8/0/oft346.pdf>