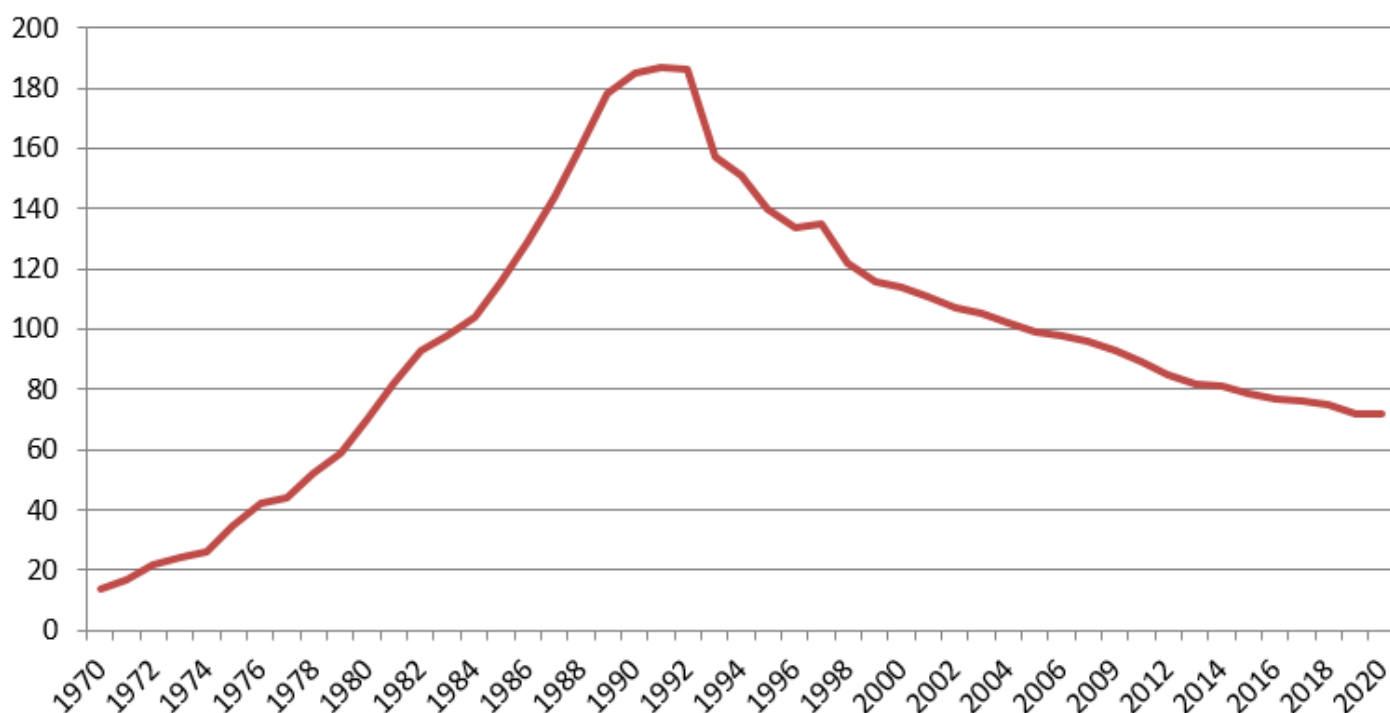


Between 2000 and 2020, 44 trash incinerators in the U.S. closed for good. Their average age when they closed was just 23. (See chart at end.)

Despite hundreds of attempts to build new waste incinerators, no new incinerator has been built at a new site since 1995. However, one major new incinerator was built adjacent to an existing incinerator in West Palm Beach, Florida, and a handful of others were rebuilt or expanded.

The trend is toward incinerators closing as they age. Few have made it to or past their 40th birthday. Most close much sooner. As of 2020, two incinerators have made it to the ripe old age of 45: Wheelabrator Saugus in Massachusetts (experiencing ongoing major noise problems and other signs of aging), and the tiny city-owned refuse-derived fuel burner in Ames, Iowa. Covanta Niagara (NY) and the small Hampton/NASA steam plant in VA turned 40 in 2020. No others have made it that far, but some are in their late 30s.

Number of Commercial Operating Trash Incinerators in the U.S.



Why do trash incinerators close early?

The following describes the reasons for the closure of U.S. trash incinerators that closed in the decade from 2011 to 2020:

New Hanover County WASTECC, 1984-2011

Wilmington, North Carolina

Why did it close?

Consistently ran a deficit. County sought contractor to take over waste operations (went with R3 Environmental LLC which couldn't get financing for dirty MRF & "clean energy" burning), and ultimately decided to close it. County considered hiring Covanta to refurbish it. Stack didn't meet current wind-resistance standards and would have needed a rebuild too.

What was the end result?

County demolished it. Investing in a clean MRF and a C&D recycling facility.

Maine Energy Recovery Company (MERC), 1987-2012

Biddeford, Maine

Why did it close?

PPA's above-market rate reverted to market rate in 2007 and would expire in 2012. After decades of complaints about trucks, odor, etc., Biddeford City Council voted in July 2012 to buy the property for \$6.65 million and close it to stimulate economic growth in the area.

What was the end result?

Demolished in Q1 2013. Waste disposal shifted to other incinerators and landfills in Maine.

Red Wing Resource Recovery Facility, 1982-2013

Red Wing, Minnesota

Why did it close?

State would not enforce flow control law, so incinerator was operating at \$500k/yr loss.

What was the end result?

Converted to recycling/compost center and transfer station. Xcel used a state grant to buy a shredder for the municipal site; non-recycled waste is now going to Xcel Red Wing.

Jackson County Resource Recovery Facility, 1987-2013

Jackson, Michigan

Why did it close?

Michigan State Department of Corrections ended contract to buy steam & electricity.

What was the end result?

End of flow control. County hired a recycling coordinator and is amending their Solid Waste Plan.

Wheelabrator Claremont, 1987-2013

Claremont, New Hampshire

Why did it close?

There was lots of citizen action and watchdogging but Wheelabrator claimed economic reasons for closing (remote transportation, small economy of scale, economics of energy and waste).

What was the end result?

Two would-be buyers of the site backed out of sale at auction, at least one was probably discouraged by city council's skepticism about his proposed gasifier. (Their skepticism was probably informed by the long-term critical citizen activism). Wheelabrator is attempting to sell the equipment.

Harrisonburg Resource Recovery Facility, 1982-2014

Harrisonburg, Virginia

Why did it close?

JMU purchased the site on Aug 1, 2015, because the university needed the space for expansion.

What was the end result?

City awarded a demolition contract to Stryker on 2/10/2016. Remaining chiller unit (renamed East Campus Power Plant) probably being run on natural gas.

Wallingford Resource Recovery Facility, 1989-2015

Wallingford, Connecticut

Why did it close?

Recycling efforts in CT reduced the trash supply to the point that Covanta proposed closing the incinerator.

What was the end result?

In 12/2014 the towns contracted with Covanta Wallingford agreed to let it convert to a transfer station. In 11/2016 Covanta wanted to close the transfer station and shift the flow to the Bristol facility, but the towns declined to change the contract and it remains a transfer station.

Wheelabrator North Broward County, 1991-2015

Pompano Beach, Florida

Why did it close?

After dissolution of the County's Resource Recovery Board, Wheelabrator lost customers to Sun Bergeron transfer stations. Broward commissioners voted 7-2 to close facility.

What was the end result?

Flow shifted to private facilities, landfill, and to Covanta South Broward which has enough capacity to handle additional flow from north of county.

Harford Waste-to-Energy Facility, 1988-2016

Joppa, Maryland

Why did it close?

Army no longer needs their steam (it's building a \$40 million natural gas-fired cogen), so the lease wasn't renewed.

What was the end result?

Closed in March 2016, authority is soliciting bids for demolition.

Wasatch Integrated Energy Recovery Facility, 1986-2017

Layton, Utah

Why did it close?

Had to make \$8 million upgrades to pollution controls and equipment, while Army had reduced interest in buying their steam.

What was the end result?

Closed on May 31, 2017, being replaced with a transfer station and landfilling, and a dirty MRF is planned.

Commerce Refuse to Energy Facility (CREF), 1986-2018

Commerce, California

Why did it close?

Activists defeated bill to allow WTE to qualify for renewable energy credits, and it couldn't negotiate a favorable new power purchase agreement, so it had "insufficient revenues to handle operating costs."

What was the end result?

Closed on June 30, 2018. Waste disposal shifted to landfills.

Covanta Warren Energy, NJ 9/1988 – 3/2019

Oxford Township, New Jersey

Why did it close?

Tip fees too low, couldn't compete with nearby landfill.

What was the end result?

Mothballed in March 2019 for up to two years of temporary shutdown, awaiting better economic conditions.

Greater Detroit Resource Recovery, 1988-2019

Detroit, Michigan

Why did it close?

Community had been complaining of stench for many years, and facility had been cited for exceeding air emission limits more than 750 times within five years. \$23 million upgrades by new owner were not enough to make it efficient. Activists sued over Clean Air Act violations.

What was the end result?

Closed in March 2019. Waste disposal shifted to landfills.

Elk River Energy Recovery Station, 1989-2019

Elk River, MN

Why did it close?

Years of low electricity prices and too little trash volume to operate at capacity.

What was the end result?

Stopped generating electricity in January 2019, closed in March, decommissioning started in the Fall, and demolition in Spring 2020.

Ages of incinerators closed from 2000-2020

State	Location	Facility	Opened	Closed	Age
	Sheldon Jackson				
AK	College	Sitka Waste-to-Energy Facility	1985	2000	15
AK	Juneau	Juneau Incinerator	1986	2004	18
AR	Osceola	Arkansas Municipal Waste to Energy, Inc.	1980	2004	24
CA	Commerce	Commerce Refuse to Energy Facility (CREF)	1987	2018	31
CO	Phillips County	Phillips County Incinerator	1997	2004	7
CT	Wallingford	Wallingford Resource Recovery Facility	1989	2015	26
FL	Pompano Beach	Wheelabrator North Broward Inc	1991	2015	24
FL	Key West	Southern Most WTE Facility	1986	2004	18
GA	Savannah	Savannah Resource Recovery Facility	1987	2008	21
IL	Robbins	Robbins Resource Recovery Facility	1997	2000	3
KS	Norton County	Norton County Incinerator	1995	2001	6
MD	Joppa	Harford Waste-to-Energy Facility	1988	2016	28
ME	Biddeford	Maine Energy Recovery Company	1987	2012	25
MI	Dearborn Heights	Central Wayne Energy, L.P.	2000	2003	3
MI	Detroit	Greater Detroit Resource Recovery	1989	2019	30
MI	Jackson	Jackson County Resource Recovery Facility	1987	2013	26
MN	Elk River	Elk River Energy Recovery Station	1989	2019	30
MN	Fergus Falls	Fergus Falls Resource Recovery Facility	1988	2006	18
MN	Red Wing	Red Wing Municipal Solid Waste Facility	1982	2013	31
MS	Moss Point	Pascagoula Energy Recovery Facility	1985	2002	17
MT	Livingston	Park County-Livingston Incinerator	1982	2005	23
NC	Wilmington	New Hanover County WASTEC	1984	2011	27
NH	Candia	Candia Incinerator	1977	2010	33
NH	Litchfield	Litchfield Incinerator	1983	2010	27
NH	Claremont	Wheelabrator Claremont	1987	2013	26
NH	Nottingham	Nottingham Incinerator	1972	2000	28
NH	Ossipee	Ossipee Incinerator	1987	2009	22
NH	Pelham	Pelham Incinerator	1978	2000	22
NH	Sutton	Sutton Incinerator	1979	2001	22
NH	Wilton	Wilton Incinerator	1978	2010	32
NJ	Warren County	Covanta Warren Energy	1988	2019	31
NY	Fire Island	Saltaire Incinerator	1965	2009	44
OR	Coos County	Beaver Hill Incinerator	1978	2012	34
SC	Charleston County	Charleston Resource Recovery Facility	1989	2009	20
SC	Hampton County	Hampton County Incinerator	1985	2002	17
TN	Nashville	Nashville Thermal Transfer Corporation	1974	2002	28
TN	Gallatin	Sumner County Resource Authority	1981	2005	24
TX	Carthage	Panola County Resource Recovery Facility	1986	2000	14
TX	Boys Ranch	Boys Ranch Incinerator	1976	2008	32
TX	Center	City of Center Waste to Energy	1986	2001	15
TX	Cleburne	City of Cleburne Incinerator	1986	2003	17
UT	Layton	Wasatch Energy Systems	1986	2017	31
VA	Harrisonburg	Harrisonburg Resource Recovery Facility	1982	2014	32
WA	Tacoma	Tacoma Waste-to-Energy Facility	1991	2005	14