

# Letter: Mining incinerator ash is foolish idea

By Alan Muller from Red Wing on Dec 10, 2015 at 3:59 p.m.

To the Editor:

The Republican Eagle reports that Red Wing is considering a scheme to mine its incinerator ash dump for metals (RE, Nov. 11). This is a bad idea for various reasons that are fairly obvious:

- Dump mining has been tried before in Red Wing and the amounts of metal recovered did not cover the costs. If recycling of metals has increased, one would expect to find even less metal in the ash these days.
- Garbage incinerator ash is nasty stuff. It contains dioxins, toxic heavy metal compounds, and other harmful materials. It's much worse from that point of view than frac sand. Neither workers nor residents should be unnecessarily exposed. The test used to claim that incinerator ash is "non-hazardous" is a leaching test supposed to tell us something about the potential for contamination of groundwater. It tells us nothing about what is actually in the ash, or about the hazards of breathing it.
- Metal recycling facilities, and their workers, would not benefit from receiving scrap dug out of an ash dump and contaminated with toxic crap.
- If there is concern about possible future liability from landfill leaks, as has been stated, the very last thing we should want is to have machines digging around in our dumps, increasing water entry and potentially breaking the liner.

This idea should be a non-starter. The thing to do about incinerator ash is to stop making it by not burning garbage.

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