

## **WARNING!**

### **BURNING MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH**

The amount of fires being set to burn leaves, plastic and other waste in residential areas in Harare has dramatically increased, leading to an increase in potential health problems in humans due to air pollution. Many of you would have seen the information on the Hazards of Leaf Burning but may we also remind everyone how serious burning non-organic waste is.

#### **WHY SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED?**

Burning plastics which contain organochlorines such as PVC releases dioxins. Dioxins disrupt hormones in the body and are extremely carcinogenic causing cancer, deformed offspring, reproductive failures, and auto-immune diseases. After release into the atmosphere they settle on crops and in our waterways. ***They are persistent and last for years!*** In the body they accumulate in body fat and can be passed onto the unborn foetus. They accumulate in animals at the top of the food chain: i.e. humans!

The burning of polystyrene polymers - such as foam cups, meat trays, egg containers, yogurt and deli containers, releases styrene. Styrene gas can readily be absorbed through the skin and lungs. At high levels styrene vapour can damage the eyes and mucous membranes. Long term exposure to styrene can affect the central nervous system, causing headaches, fatigue, weakness and depression.

Those are just two in the veritable soup of toxic chemicals that would be released in a fire from discarded batteries, rubber tyres, etc.

The World Health Organisation announced recently that it has been scientifically validated that air pollution causes lung cancer - it is now considered more dangerous than passive cigarette or cigar smoke.

It is high time the authorities (police, fire, City Council, municipality, EMA) started taking public health seriously and implement a zero tolerance policy for environmental offenders. City management urgently needs to upgrade our waste management policies and carry out pollution awareness campaigns.

If you feel upset about being gassed out of your home, go and register your complaint to your local District Office, police station, fire station, or phone EMA on 792772 or 252087. The more noise we collectively make the quicker something will get done.

When you or your neighbours burn your rubbish, you are violating the rights of others to clean fresh air. EMA confirms that the burning of **any** materials which release toxins into the atmosphere is illegal.

### **BURNING OF LEAF LITTER, PLASTIC OR ANY OTHER MATERIAL WHICH RELEASES TOXINS IS ILLEGAL - FINES ARE IN PLACE FOR OFFENDERS!**

TO REPORT BURNING CALL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AGENCY (EMA)  
ON  
792772 OR 077213347 OR 0773002134