



Air Quality Assessment at Sint Maarten Pond Island Municipal and Hurricane Waste Sites: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the scope of the air quality screening at the municipal waste sites?

A preliminary screening of smoke from subsurface fires at the Pond Island municipal waste disposal site and hurricane debris site was conducted at the end of August. The purpose of this baseline assessment was to identify the chemical composition of the smoke on the dumpsite, in preparation for the firefighting to be conducted as part of the Sint Maarten Trust Fund Emergency Debris Management Project.

What are the main conclusions of the air screening?

The baseline assessment showed concentrations of emissions that exceeded occupational exposure limits for certain pollutants within the perimeter of the dumpsite. International occupational standards were used. These results were expected as the samples which exceeded limits were collected in the smoke where emissions are high.

What do the results imply for ambient air quality in neighboring communities?

The screening results do not allow us to evaluate ambient air quality in neighboring communities. The measurements were taken at emission sites at the source (in the smoke) and only measured composition, but not emission rates. The screening cannot draw any conclusions about ambient air quality, for this ambient air quality measurements are needed.

Is the smoke dangerous for the people living in the nearby areas?

Currently we do not have enough information to assess the air quality and level of concentration of pollutants in the air of the surrounding areas. The only information we have is that the chemicals in the smoke exceed the allowed limits when they are measured directly at the source in the dumpsite, which may affect the workers at the site.

Why are screening readouts measured against occupational standards?

Occupational standards were used because the intent of the screening was to understand how to protect workers and fire fighters on the sites. Occupational standards are designed to protect workers exposed to the pollutants during working hours, five days a week. In general, the allowable concentration limits for occupational standards are higher than for public standards.

What are the immediate measures put in place following the assessment?

The waste disposal sites will be restricted to authorized personnel, workers at the site will be equipped with appropriate protective gear. Air quality measurements will be carried out in neighboring communities by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment of the Netherlands (*Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu*, RIVM) in early 2019 and further air quality monitoring and a warning system will follow under the Emergency Debris Management Project.