

# Poolbeg firm repeatedly fined in US for flouting pollution laws

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THE waste management giant behind the controversial Poolbeg incinerator plant has been fined thousands of dollars and cited for emissions violations at a number of its US operations.

An [Irish Independent](#) investigation has uncovered details of the fines imposed on [Covanta Energy](#).

The [New Jersey](#)-based company is the parent of the main shareholder at [Dublin](#) Waste to Energy, **COVANTA** Energy [Ireland](#) which will operate the €350m Poolbeg facility, and has paid a series of fines and settlements in the US in recent years.

The revelations about the series of fines and settlements in the [USA](#) will fuel protest over the plan, which is in the constituency of [Environment Minister John Gormley](#).

The size and cost of the plant has already caused controversy -- as has the structure of the contract with Covanta Energy, its private partner, Danish firm Dong Energy, and [Dublin City Council](#).

Now it has emerged that Covanta Energy was forced to pay \$355,000 (€250,957) into a special fund in November as part of a settlement with the [US Department of Environmental Protection](#) (DEP).

The settlement was paid after the company was found to have exceeded permitted limits for dioxin emissions at a facility in [Wallingford, Connecticut](#).

And Covanta Energy was also hit with a fine of \$45,600 (€32,230) in October 2008 for excessive emissions in [Pennsylvania](#).

## Violations

In August of the same year, it was penalised \$14,025 (€9,912) for causing air pollution in New Jersey.

And another investigation by the DEP found that the company had exceeded the allowable emissions for dioxins by almost 350pc at a plant in [Pittsfield, Massachusetts](#).

The company was also fined \$7,653 (€5,409) for failing to report other air quality violations at the Pittsfield plant between January and March of 2008.

Covanta Energy admitted that it had breached emission guidelines. [Scott Whitney](#), Covanta's European president, said: "Breaches are not acceptable and Covanta does not defend the indefensible. Compliance is literally 99.9pc and we are aiming for 100pc. Plants normally operate well below the emission limits.

"When breaches occur (which is rare) immediate action is taken (including shut downs if necessary) until the problem is rectified." Mr Gormley said any company with operations in Ireland has to adhere to guidelines specified by the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA).

"I can't comment on individual companies but obviously the issue of any company adhering to strict environmental standards is cause for concern," he said.

"The EPA is the licensing and enforcement authority here and I'm sure it will do its job."

Dublin City Council, the public partner in the Poolbeg development, said it also acknowledged the fines and settlements imposed on Covanta Energy in the USA.

"It (Covanta) is obliged by the contract to comply with the terms of the EPA licence and in addition to sanctions that the body might take," said [Elizabeth Arnett](#), a spokeswoman for the project. "The city council has a clause in the contract that provides for financial penalties if they exceed [EU](#) directive emission levels."

Meanwhile, documents obtained by the Irish Independent show that the public cost of the plant will be €600m over 25 years; while "private revenues" of €1bn will be generated over the same period.

### **Householders**

The council yesterday confirmed the cost of the project -- but claimed that this is not taxpayers' money.

A spokesman added: "It will come from householders and businesses paying their waste charges in line with polluter-pays principle and will be offset by the profits made by the city council from the sale of energy."

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