



# IMPACT

## Managing Hospital Waste in Jamaica

The incinerator would have released dioxins and heavy metals into surrounding communities.



E-LAW U.S. scientists worked with the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) to score a big victory for the environment and public health.

Diana McCaulay, JET's director, was working with citizens concerned about plans for a proposed medical waste incinerator at the University Hospital of the West Indies, in Kingston. The incinerator would have released dioxins and heavy metals into surrounding communities.

Diana called on E-LAW U.S. for help.

E-LAW U.S. Environmental Research Scientist, Meche Lu, and Staff Scientist, Mark Chernaik, critiqued plans for the proposed incinerator and gave JET information about alternative and affordable medical waste management practices that safeguard public health.

While medical waste incineration is being phased-out in the U.S. and Europe, companies are pushing this technology in countries like Jamaica. Many incinerators are poorly designed and endanger public health. Disinfecting medical waste in an autoclave or using steam sterilization before final disposal in a sanitary landfill are more environmentally friendly technologies.



In May 2004, Diana wrote to the E-LAW network:

"I want to report a victory probably my first ever major one in 15 years. Thanks to advice and an excellent critique from Mark and Meche on a planned medical waste incinerator for one of our large hospitals, the hospital advised me yesterday that it has now decided to scrap the incinerator and use autoclaving, with a shredder.

I feel very encouraged by this—mostly victories are very hard to find here in Jamaica. I intend now to see what I can do to get government policy changed, so that all hospitals will begin to change their waste management practices."

We congratulate Diana on her success.

For more information about this E-LAW Impact or Jamaica Environment Trust, contact the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide at [elawus@elaw.org](mailto:elawus@elaw.org).