



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang
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Press Release

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CAP, SAM object to approval of portable pyrolysis units

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) are concerned to learn that the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA) had approved the use of portable pyrolysis units to facilitate the disposal of solid waste generated by the recent flood disaster. The media reported that KASA Secretary General had stated that special approval will be given by the Department of Environment (DOE) to service providers which have the facility and expertise.

Pyrolysis is an incineration in disguise, as this technology heats waste materials to high temperatures, creating gas, solid and liquid residues. The same toxic byproducts can be released from portable pyrolysis units as from other incinerators.

Depending on the waste input into the pyrolysis unit, dioxins and furans, heavy metals, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, hydrogen chloride, sulfur dioxide, and more could be emitted, as well as toxic contaminants in the char or ash residues, and contaminated waste water. Many of these pollutants are carcinogenic and threaten public health even at very low levels.

Some companies claim that the pyrolysis technology is "pollution free" or have "zero emissions," but these claims have been shown repeatedly to be untrue. Some companies also claim that their technologies are not incinerators. The fact is that the toxic gases created by heating the waste are combusted or incinerated.

The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) reports that numerous proposals for waste treatment facilities, including plasma arc, pyrolysis, and gasification technologies failed to receive final approval to operate when claims of the companies did not withstand public and governmental scrutiny.

This brings to question whether the portable pyrolysis units approved by KASA has received prior approval for operations. Under the Environmental Quality (Prescribed Activities) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Order 2015, construction of thermal treatment plant is a prescribed activity in the Second Schedule of the Order. The Department of Environment must clarify to the public whether the EIA report for the proposed pyrolysis plant has been approved.

We encourage the public to segregate post-flood discards to set apart those that can be repaired, reused, refurbished, recycled, composted or disposed of. The Ministry has advised flood victims to separate e-waste which will be transported out by the Ministry and the State government.

We urge KASA, DOE and the National Solid Waste Management Department to drop its plans to use the portable pyrolysis units or any thermal or incineration technologies as it will subject the public to toxic emissions, and a waste of resources.

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