

PCA denies a request to burn more trash at Hennepin County's incinerator next to Target Field.

By [STEVE BRANDT](#), Star Tribune

Last update: November 24, 2009 - 9:50 PM

It is looking increasingly likely that the downtown Minneapolis incinerator won't be getting permission to burn more garbage before the Twins celebrate their home opener next door in April.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has told the burner's operator that it won't amend the incinerator's state permit to allow the Hennepin County-owned plant to burn more.

Instead, the agency said, the county must seek a more time-consuming major permit amendment, which will require public comment. That is likely to take 12 to 18 months.

Hennepin County and burner operator Covanta Energy are seeking PCA approval to increase the waste-to-energy facility's capacity by 21 percent to an average of 1,212 tons daily. They have also sought to amend their zoning permit, but the city has delayed action while the PCA considers the capacity increase.

State Rep. Frank Hornstein, DFL-Minneapolis, who has helped lead opposition to the change, applauded the PCA decision, accusing the applicants of seeking to bypass public comment. He is one of 10 legislators who sent a letter to the city this year asking Mayor R.T. Rybak and the City Council to reject the increased burning limit.

Covanta's request follows the lifting of a state law that barred such facilities from burning more trash than an average of 1,000 tons per day.

The PCA could ask for supplemental information on the health effects of the facility's emissions if it decides that evaluations done before the ballpark was built are not sufficient.

A citizens petition for an environmental assessment worksheet is pending at the agency, but officials there say they won't act on it until Covanta applies for a permit.

A Covanta spokesman said Tuesday that the company is still evaluating the agency's decision. The PCA letter to Covanta last week cautioned the company that it must comply with the current burner limit while seeking a higher limit.

Steve Brandt • 612-673-4438