

LETTER OF THE DAY

We should not burn plastic

EDITOR: Did you now that the most dangerous emissions are caused by burning plastics! Plastics, especially PVC, when burned produce the harmful quantities of dioxins, a group of highly toxic chemicals are emitted. Dioxins are actually among the known most toxic or poisonous chemicals to human organisms. Dioxins and furans are persistent organic pollutants (POPs). When released from burning plastic waste, they are transported through the air and are then deposited onto land or onto bodies of water or mountain tops, usually in cooler areas

Dioxins and furans persist for long periods of time in the environment and have a tendency to bio-accumulate, which means they build up in predators at the top of the food web. Bio-accumulation of pollutants usually occurs indirectly through contaminated water and food rather than breathing the contaminated air directly.

In wildlife, the range of effects associated with these pollutants includes cancer, deformed offspring, reproductive failure, immune

diseases and subtle neuro-behavioural effects. Humans can be exposed indirectly just like wildlife, especially through consumption of contaminated fish, meat and dairy products.

Probably most of the cancers we are experiencing now in Uganda could be an effect of dioxins and furans from uncontrolled burning of waste that includes PVC

Plastic Items such as PVC carpets, pipes, cutlery, curtains, toys, etc contain vinyl chloride, the chemical used to make PVC, is a known human carcinogen, according to the World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

Most people who burn their plastic domestic waste do not realise how harmful this practice is to their health and to the environment. Surveys show that home burning of waste is widespread across both urban and rural areas.

Bukosi Wilbur

The writer is member of National Coordinating committee on POPs management in Uganda

PHOTO BY TONY RUJUTA

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8338



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letters@newvision.co.ug

letters@newvision.co.ug