



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: O2/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2096 {NW2501E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 20 of 2022

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 27 May 2022

Ms A M M Weber (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

1. Whether, with regard to the pollution of disposable diapers in the rivers of the Republic, nappies are classified as (a) hazardous waste or (b) general waste; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
2. What (a) happened to the EDANA Stewardship Programme for Absorbent Hygiene Products, (b) are the reasons absorbent hygienic products are considered non-hazardous and (c) happened to the incinerators at (i) schools and (ii) public facilities;
3. Given that disposable nappies are dangerous to the environment as they cannot dispose by themselves, what (a) plans has her department put in place to address the fact that rivers in the Republic have become the waste sight for disposable nappies and (b) processes does her department have in place to ensure diseases do not increase through the pollution of the waste in the rivers of the Republic?

2096. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

1. (a)(b) Disposable diapers are considered general waste and must be collected as part of municipal refuse collection for disposal by a municipality at a licensed landfill site. It is only when disposable diapers are generated at a health care facility that they are considered to be hazardous waste and need to be collected by a registered Health Care Risk Waste Service provider for final treatment at a Health Care waste treatment facility with the appropriate technology.
2. (a) The EDANA Stewardship Programme for Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHPs) is a new voluntary initiative, which builds on a series of voluntary initiatives for the nonwovens industry to provide transparency and reassurance for consumers regarding trace levels of impurities found in AHPs. The department has worked with the EDANA team in the past to find working solutions to the disposal of diapers in the country and they once funded the Aller River Pilot Project and eThekweni Municipality AHP Waste Safe Disposal Partnership Pilot Project for a period of six months in the year 2019. The goal of the project was to build community capacity so that in the long term the community takes co-responsibility in partnership with the authorities for river health. EDANA also initiated and funded a study titled "Estimation of the volumes and percentages of absorbent hygiene products in South African Municipal Solid Waste" done by CSIR in the year 2019. The department will further engage EDANA in future when the drafting of the AHP strategy has commenced, as they are a critical role player in the AHP sector.
- (b) Absorbent hygiene products are considered general waste because the material and makeup of the diaper is classified as non-hazardous. When a diaper in a household is soiled, the contents are organic and organic waste is considered non-hazardous. It is only when soiled diapers are generated at a health care facility (i.e. clinic, hospitals, etc.) that they are considered to be hazardous waste due to the infectious risk, and they need to be managed accordingly as per legislation and standards applicable to healthcare risk waste management.

- (c) National Environment Management: Air Quality Act, 2004 (Act No. 30 of 2004) (NEM:AQA) and its associated Regulations regulates the emissions from existing incinerators by means of an Air Emission License (AEL). Compliance to the conditions stipulated in the AEL is how the existing incinerators are being managed.

Questions regarding functionality and regulatory compliance of incinerators would need to posed to the Minister responsible for relevant facilities.

3. (a) The current plans to address AHP waste challenges across the country include the following:
- The drafting of an AHP waste management strategy for the country to look at the design and disposal of AHPs waste such as baby diapers, adult diapers and feminine care products.
- (b) The department, through the Working for Programmes (e.g. Working on Waste), conducts education and awareness-raising activities with the community where river clean-ups are taking place.

Regards



MS B D CREECY, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 10/6/2022