

Final Phase of Kirby Scrap Tire Dump Cleanup Begins



The Kirby scrap tire dump is located near the village of Sycamore in northeast Wyandot County. Thick, black smoke from the 1999 fire could be seen as far south as Columbus, 60 miles away. The fire occurred just weeks after the state had begun a project to remove the millions of tires stored on the 140-acre site. The tire dump was one of the largest in the United States.

Ohio EPA has begun the final phase of the cleanup – excavation and removal of an estimated 65,000 tons of burnt tires and contaminated soil left from the fire. As shown in the table below, a single pile at Kirby was generally larger than an entire site.

Number of passenger tire equivalents removed (1 PTE = 20 pounds)	
10 Kirby Piles	10 Other Ohio Sites
3,950,879 PTEs	4,031,106 PTEs – Summit County
3,636,700 PTEs	2,173,242 PTEs – Coshocton County
1,922,823 PTEs	1,071,124 PTEs – Portage County
1,327,637 PTEs	964,399 PTEs – Summit County
976,740 PTEs	860,346 PTEs – Clark County
781,121 PTEs	574,232 PTEs – Lorain County
756,138 PTEs	559,376 PTEs – Portage County
568,023 PTEs	530,476 PTEs – Mahoning County
553,631 PTEs	504,291 PTEs – Morrow County
523,439 PTEs	484,309 PTEs – Harrison County

Work on the final phase began the first week of June and will take several months to complete. In March, the state awarded a \$3.26 million contract to remove the burnt tires to Environmental Quality Management, Inc., (EQM) of Cincinnati. EQM previously was contracted by U.S. EPA during the 1999 fire. The company worked on the fire and completed burial of the tire fire residues.

To put the fire out, the burning tires were buried with more than two feet of soil. EQM will dig up the burnt tires, some of which are melted so badly they are not recognizable as tires. Most of the tires and contaminated soil will be disposed of at the Wyandot County landfill and Sunny Farms landfill in Seneca County.

To date, Ohio EPA has spent more than \$13 million to remove the surface tires, plus more than \$6 million to treat surface water contaminated when it contacts the tires buried in the fire. Funding for the cleanup comes from a \$1 fee collected on new tires sold in Ohio.

The state Legislature increased the new tire fee from 50 cents to \$1 after the Kirby fire. This allowed the state to clear the site of tires in seven years - about half the time that was originally estimated. The additional fee also has provided money for numerous other cleanups of scrap tire dumps around the state. Most of the major scrap tire sites in Ohio have been cleaned up.

The four men who started the Kirby fire were convicted of arson and all four were sentenced to prison and fined.

In 2005, a Wyandot County judge ordered Rebecca Williams, her husband, Donald, her mother, Doris Kirby, and their company, Kirbys' Tire Recycling, Inc., to pay a record \$20 million civil penalty for violating Ohio's scrap tire and solid waste laws at the tire dump. They also were ordered to pay up to \$26.3 million in cleanup costs. The money remains unpaid.

More information about the site, as well as archived photos, are also available through the Public Interest Center's [online media kit](#).