



Taming the Dragon...

An open letter to Governor John E. Baldacci, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the selectmen of Thomaston, from the community organization "Neighbors for a Safe Dragon (NSD)":

Neighbors for a Safe Dragon (NSD), a community group dedicated to cleaning up the Dragon Cement operation in Thomaston, Maine, is calling upon DEP and Governor Baldacci to redress the environmental contamination that has threatened the public health, property values and environment there.

NSD is not opposed to the cement plant operation and does not want to close it down. Dragon provides jobs and products for our community, and we applaud Dragon for recently winning the governor's environmental award for good business practices. But there are still many polluted sites that need to be cleaned up-sites that Dragon has neglected for decades. *What we want is a safe, law-abiding cement operation that is closely monitored by the state and town selectmen.*



Why Do We Care? Cement manufacturing requires large amounts of used tires, landfill leachate, and leftover coal materials which can contain hazardous chemicals. Some of these toxic materials are in the company's fifteen-acre waste pile, which is already leaking into surface and groundwater. The community fears the toxic material may also be in the dust and fumes from the waste pile and smokestacks.

The US Environmental Protection Agency has found that cement kiln dust contains the following:

- **Chromium (causes liver and kidney damage)**
- **Lead (impairs the physical and mental development of children and babies)**
- **Dioxins (cause cancer, weaken the immune system, and cause birth defects)**

What Do We Want? For a decade, the DEP has confirmed that Dragon's waste pile contains "problem" chemicals that have been contaminating the environment. In 1992 Dragon applied for an air pollution license from DEP but could not meet the requirements. Yet, through a series of bureaucratic side steps, DEP continues to allow them to operate, putting the citizen's health at risk.

We want the state and local officials to enforce the law and create an effective regulatory program to protect the people and environment of Thomaston. The plan should:

- **require the waste pile to be immediately capped and stabilized to prevent further air and water contamination**
- **develop a program to minimize and monitor harmful smokestack emissions, dust, and water contamination from the manufacturing operation**
- **establish an open public record of the fuel and feed stocks that the plant uses in manufacturing**
- **develop and implement a long term reclamation plan to deal with waste material from the plant**
- **develop a compensation fund for those whose property and health has been compromised**



NSD will be holding a general meeting on Dragon Cement on January 13, 2005 at 6:30 pm at St. John's Church, 200 Main Street, Thomaston, Maine. Please join us!