

Planet's most polluted sites unveiled

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China, India and Russia top the list of the world's most polluted places, a study of global pollution found on Wednesday.

The three countries are each home to two of the world's top 10 polluted sites, while the others are in Peru, Ukraine, Zambia and Azerbaijan.

Linfen and Tianying are the worst polluted places in China because of poor air quality and the metal industry respectively. Sukinda and Vapi are the worst in India, the former because of mining and the latter from general industry. Norilsk, where metals are extracted, and Dzerzhinsk, home to weapons manufacture, are Russia's most polluted locations.

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The Blacksmith Institute, which produced the report on the "dirty 30" most polluted places on the planet, said it was not possible to rank the top 10 in order because of the different forms of pollution in each place and because they differed widely in their geography and population.

"All sites in the dirty 30 are very toxic and dangerous to human health," said David Hanrahan, director of global operations at Blacksmith.

Richard Fuller, director of the institute, said: "The fact of the matter is that children are sick and dying in these polluted places and it's not rocket science to fix them."

Mining was found to be the most frequent cause of pollution in the dirty 30 but metals extraction, petrochemicals and other industries were also to blame.

The worst places for air pollution were Linfen, Lanzhou and Urumqi in China, Magnitogorsk in Russia and Mexico City.

The Dandora dump in Kenya made it on to the list for being the worst site polluted by urban waste.

Chernobyl's legacy of nuclear contamination put the region in the top 10, and Mailuu-Suu in Kyrgyzstan was also judged one of the worst polluted for its nuclear site.

The list was drawn up by a panel of experts including members from Green Cross Switzerland, a charity that works to overcome the damage caused by industrial and military disasters. The panel based its judgment on the toxicity of the pollution of the site, its scale and the number of people affected.

The study found most of the polluted sites were far beyond the ability of local populations to clean up and that national government assistance or international aid would be needed.

The study said: "Unfortunately there are too many of these industry towns still carrying on where there is no economic alternative for the local population."

The authors said the way to clean up such sites was to “begin with supporting a core group of concerned people and officials to create a consensus and build momentum, starting with some simple but visible improvements to show that progress is possible”.

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