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Urban Wastelands: The World's 10 Most Polluted Places

Focusing on Industrial Pollution

By [Bryan Walsh @bryanwalsh](#) | Nov. 04, 2013 | [9 Comments](#)

Climate change may get most of the attention, but the biggest environmental risk to human health today isn't global warming. It's industrial pollution, often in poor cities and towns where factories, power plants and chemical facilities face little to no regulation. A new [report](#) from the Blacksmith Institute—an NGO that addresses industrial pollution—estimates that industrial pollution poses a health risk to more than 200 million people around the world, often through elevated levels of cancer, respiratory disease and other illnesses. The report names and shames ten of the most polluted places on the planet, which range from the oil-contaminated Niger Delta in Nigeria to the badly polluted Soviet-era industrial town of Dzerzhinsk in Russia. Life in these places can be short and brutal, but the good news is that cleaning up this sort of old industrial pollution is often much cheaper and easier than dealing with the pervasive problem of climate change. The international community just has to make it happen.



Jane Hahn / EPA

A boy places another piece of 'e-waste' on a burning pile of electronics in Agbogbloshie, Accra, Ghana, in 2008.