

# Thermoselect Reality Check



Interstate Waste Technologies (IWT) is marketing Thermoselect gasification incineration to Los Angeles. This guide compares claims about Thermoselect technology with facts about its operations in Germany and Italy.

What the report to LA County says	Reality
IWT (using Thermoselect technology) is the top technology supplier <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thermoselect’s flagship gasification incinerator in Karlsruhe, Germany closed in November 2004 after losses of <b>\$500 million dollars</b>.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Epic operating problems led German newspapers to nickname it “Thermodefect”</li> </ul>
This incinerator would make energy <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thermoselect’s Karlsruhe incinerator consumed 17 million cubic meters of natural gas to heat the waste in one year alone, and <b>returned no electricity to the grid</b> that year,<sup>4</sup> undermining claims of energy generation</li> </ul>
Existing operational experience: 100 (on a scale of 100) <sup>5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational problems at Thermoselect’s Karlsruhe incinerator included a toxic gas leak, an explosion, cracks in the heating chamber causing that leaked toxic gas, and leaks of contaminated wastewater<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
Landfill diversion: 100 (on a scale of 100) <sup>7</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While in operations, Thermoselect’s Karlsruhe incinerator was only able to process 1/5 of the contracted waste, forcing cities who had contracted with it to send their waste elsewhere<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>
Supplier credibility: 100 (on a scale of 100) <sup>9</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thermoselect’s management was <b>convicted of contaminating a lake</b> with cyanide, chlorine and nitrogen compounds from Thermoselect’s first facility in Fontodoce, Italy<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• A full year after Thermoselect’s Karlsruhe incinerator closed and months after the facility was fully dismantled, Thermoselect claimed on its website that the Karlsruhe incinerator was still in operations<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>
“Economically, these technologies appear to have the ability to compete favorably with other solid waste disposal methods in a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The same county report states that Thermoselect would require tipping fees of \$186/ton of waste<sup>13</sup> (regional landfill tipping fees appear to be no higher than \$40/ton)</li> </ul>

commercial facility.”<sup>12</sup>

<b>What Thermoselect claims</b>	<b>Reality</b>
Technology “completely destroys dioxins and furans” <sup>14</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thermoselect’s website lists emissions from its incinerators including dioxins and furans<sup>15</sup></li><li>• Dioxins tested at amounts above regulatory limits in the gas created by the Karlsruhe incinerator<sup>16</sup></li></ul>
“Harmful substances in the waste are also completely destroyed” <sup>17</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Releases of toxic gases forced the temporary closure of Thermoselect’s Karlsruhe incinerator<sup>18</sup></li><li>• Thermoselect’s Karlsruhe incinerator exceeded emissions for hydrogen chloride, particulates, nitrogen oxides and total organic carbon<sup>19</sup></li></ul>

<b>What IWT claims</b>	<b>Reality</b>
“Closed loop process - has no process water discharge” <sup>20</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Karlsruhe incinerator discharged approximately 120,000 cubic meters of wastewater into the Rhine River in one year<sup>21</sup></li><li>• Not only does Thermoselect technology discharge water, it has discharged <b>contaminated water</b> (in both Karlsruhe and Fontodoce, Italy where Thermoselect was convicted of environmental crimes)</li></ul>
“Cost competitive with other forms of waste disposal” <sup>22</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See last box under LA County report claims</li></ul>

1 URS, Conversion Technology Evaluation Report for the County of Los Angeles, August 18, 2005, page 2-25  
2 Süddeutsche Zeitung [Munich, Germany], "The End for Thermoselect [Aus für Thermoselect]," 5 Mar. 2004; Frankfurter Allgemeine  
3 Zeitung [Frankfurt, Germany], "No Future for Thermoselect [Keine Zukunft für Thermoselect]," 3 Mar. 2004.  
4 URS, Conversion Technology Evaluation Report for the County of Los Angeles, August 18, 2005, page ES-13  
5 Fränkische Landeszeitung, "Natural Gas Use Should Be Halved This Year [Erdgas-Verbrauch soll dieses Jahr halbiert werden]," 29 Jan.  
6 2003.  
7 URS, Conversion Technology Evaluation Report for the County of Los Angeles, August 18, 2005, page 2-26  
8 Bernhard Baldas, "Magic Gone from Miracle Garbage Weapon [Entzauberte Müllwunderwaffe]," Die Tageszeitung [Germany] 28 Aug.  
9 2001.  
10 URS, Conversion Technology Evaluation Report for the County of Los Angeles, August 18, 2005, page 2-26  
11 Bernhard Baldas, "Closure Threatens the Karlsruhe Garbage Miracle [Dem Karlsruher Müllwunder droht das Aus.]," Die Tageszeitung  
12 [Germany] 28 Oct. 2003.  
13 URS, Conversion Technology Evaluation Report for the County of Los Angeles, August 18, 2005, 2-26  
14 Frankfurter Rundschau [Frankfurt, Germany], "Incident Halts Incinerator Project. Regulators Want New Review of the Technology  
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17 2005).  
18 URS, Conversion Technology Evaluation Report for the County of Los Angeles, August 18, 2005, ES-13  
19 URS, Conversion Technology Evaluation Report for the County of Los Angeles, August 18, 2005, 2-36  
20 Thermoselect, Process Characteristics, <<http://www.thermoselect.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Technologie&m=2>>, (Viewed 2 Aug.  
21 2005).  
22 Thermoselect, The Environment, <<http://www.thermoselect.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Umwelt&m=2>> (Viewed 2 Aug. 2005).  
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Wolfgang Heining, "Skepticism from Hanau Opponents Proves True: Karlsruhe Thermoselect Garbage Oven on the Verge of Closing  
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