

# Did disposed medical waste include aborted fetuses?

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MARION COUNTY, Ore. (KOIN 6) — The Marion County Board of Commissioners voted to halt a medical waste program Wednesday after reports surfaced accusing the waste facility of disposing human tissue, including aborted fetuses.

The board said they took immediate action in response to [an article published in the British Columbia Catholic Herald newspaper April 21](#) that claimed “biomedical waste” was being disposed at the [Covanta Marion, Inc. Energy-from-Waste facility in Brooks](#) that contained “human tissue” and “fetal tissue.”



Bud Waterman is a former temp worker at Covanta Marion, Inc.'s waste facility in Brooks, Ore., April 23, 2014. (KOIN 6)

“We are outraged and disgusted that this material could be included in medical waste received at the facility,” said Marion County Commissioner Janet Carlson in a written statement. “We did not know this practice was occurring until today. We are taking immediate action and initiating discussions with Covanta Marion to make certain that this type of medical waste is not accepted in the future.”

Bud Waterman, a former temp worker at Covanta Marion, Inc., said two to three times a week, 53-foot tractor trailers carrying biohazards dropped off loads at the facility in Brooks.

On more than one occasion, Waterman said the contents of the truck spilled out of their containers.

“It would make you sick, especially if you had to clean it up or have to pull a box off the trailer,” said Waterman.

Covanta responded to the claims early Thursday morning by placing blame on Marion County and said the company is halting the program until answers are given.

“The medical waste program at the Marion County Resource Recovery Facility is County run and managed,” Covanta said in a statement. “Marion County contracts for and delivers medical waste to the facility and Covanta has no responsibility for the program. Covanta is shocked by these allegations and is discontinuing the receipt of this waste stream until we have been assured by the County that this alleged material is not being delivered to the facility.”

The facility in Marion County opened in 1987, according to [Convanta-Marion, Inc.'s website](#). It's a pioneer partnership that not only accepts tons of solid waste but also non-hazardous biomedical waste from across the state and country.

The waste the facility receives is then burned at temperatures reaching 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, boiling water and generating steam that drives turbines, which generate electrical power, according to [Marion County's website](#).

Waterman said he believes certified contractors have been carrying fetuses from British Columbia to Oregon, where state statutes allow fetuses to be disposed.



FILE – Marion County Commissioner Sam

Brentano, April 23, 2014. (KOIN 6)

While the current statutes include fetuses in the disposal of medical waste, Marion County Commissioner Sam Brentano said the county's board will hold an emergency meeting Thursday morning to ban the practice.

However, it remains unclear how long the facility was possibly disposing fetuses.

"I don't know that you can know just like I should have known, but I didn't," said Brentano. "I'm sorry I didn't know that this included fetal tissue, but now that I do know, believe me things change."

Waterman said he believes fetuses have been incinerated at the Marion County facility for years and used for energy, a practice that the Canadian government will not do.

"They knew it, they had to. I don't see how they could not know it," said Waterman.

KOIN 6 News will continue to follow this story.

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