

MERC: Timeline

1982: Facing increasing federal and state pressure about their respective trash landfills, the cities of Biddeford and Saco release a RFP (request for proposal) for a company to build a trash incinerator.

March 1983: Kuhr Technologies Inc. chosen to build new facility, General Electric will design the plant.

Sept. 1983: Site selected in Biddeford

June 1984: Plato Truman delivers petitions to Biddeford City Hall to force a citizen's referendum. The petitions are discarded because the city has already signed a contract with KTI.

Dec. 1984: Biddeford Planning Board denies KTI's request to construct a 244-foot ventilation stack; city councilors subsequently vote to override that decision.

April 1987: Maine Energy begins equipment testing.

Sept. 1987: Plant begins accepting waste from surrounding communities

Oct. 1987: Ash emissions begin spewing from the company's smokestack.

June 1989: Company fined for ash emissions.

Jan. 1990: Saco files suit against MERC, KTI and General Electric, claiming environmental problems and a breach of contracted tipping fees. Out of court settlement reached.

June 1990: Company tells communities that they are facing likely bankruptcy.

1991: Biddeford Mayor Bonita Belanger and Saco Mayor Mark Johnston re negotiate the three-year contract, allowing plant to accept city waste until 2007 with tougher restrictions placed upon the operation.

1997: Company announces that Central Maine Power Co., has bought out the remainder of its power contracts.

Oct. 1998: As odor complaints begin to increase, company officials vow to correct the problem, renewed citizen opposition to the plant intensifies as Biddeford advertising agency owner Jim Boldebook launches new website: www.stoptheodor.com

1999: Several city council candidates in both Biddeford and Saco focus on MERC, saying they will get tough on the company.

Dec. 15, 1999: Planned merger between KTI and Casella Waste Systems of Vermont is finalized and approved by the Securities Exchange Commission.

Feb. 2000: New broad-based citizens group (Twin Cities Renaissance) announces it will bring a new level of pressure to relocate the plant out of the downtown area.

April 2000: Ted Hill, KTI's president, and Vice President Sam Zaitlin announce their resignations.

2001: Both Biddeford and Saco file suit against the company, alleging that the 1999 merger violated a clause in the 1991 contract.

March 2002: After several months of closed-door negotiating sessions with company officials, Saco leaders announce they are considering a settlement with the company.

March 15, 2002: TCR organizes overwhelming opposition force to attend Saco City Council meeting. City withdraws its settlement plan.

April 2002: Biddeford City Council votes to re-route all trash trucks through Saco. Council begins to deliberate an air toxins ordinance. Both cities reject an offer that would have outgoing Gov. Angus King to negotiate talks with the company.

Nov. 2003: Negotiations regarding a possible court settlement between the company and its two host communities begins.

Jan. 2004: The Tri-County collaborative, that includes 19 other communities, withdraws its own legal action against the company in favor of better trash disposal contracts.