

Where Is the One Million Tonnes of Toxic Tyre Dust and Particulates Discharged into the Environment Each Year in the US and Europe?

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An estimated 1.1m tonnes of toxic tyre waste including highly dangerous, polluting particulates are discharged into the environment/atmosphere each year from a combined total of about 590 million cars currently in the United States and Europe.

In the US, there is roughly an estimated one car for every person: each car having 4 tyres and these tyres wear out on average at between 3 to 4 years. A European Commission review reports that between 10-30% of the rubber from each tyre is lost as it wears out over its life and the tyres themselves are scrapped at the rate of an estimated 1.1 tyre, per person each year.

This toxic, tyre waste inevitably ends up polluting our rivers, streams and lakes and, of course, also the air that we breathe. And air pollution is known to contribute to heart and lung problems and premature death, also asthma and various cancers particularly in high density traffic areas. Every year in the UK, particulate matter is blamed for an additional 10,000 deaths, due to heart and lung disease. However, even after a century of motor cars with rubber tyres, we are still unaware of the exact health hazards from lost tyre tread.

The primary ingredient in tyre rubber is a synthetic polymer called styrene-butadiene and the rubber contains carbon black, and hazardous compounds of lead, sulphur and zinc. All of these constituents are highly dangerous if ingested and the smaller the particles of these organic and inorganic chemicals contained in the lost rubber tyre dust, the more deeply they can penetrate the lungs.

The fact that over a million tonnes of tyre waste disappears into the environment every year and nobody knows exactly where, is a very frightening fact.

And this problem is in addition to that of toxic diesel and petrol exhaust emissions, and unfortunately will not be solved by the advent of electric cars which still require tyres and brake pads.

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