

# Industrial Silence<sup>1</sup>—Who Oversees Industries?

**This is the first report in a series regarding inadequate supervision of industrial practices in Israel.**

## Executive Summary

This report is the first in a series of reports that are being published based on the ongoing research conducted by the nonprofit organization Citizens for the Environment in the Galilee (CFE). CFE is undertaking the task of examining whether government officials make a satisfactory supervision on factories, and to what extent factories are abiding by environmental regulations. The report examines who monitors, who oversees the monitoring and who supervises the environmental activities of the factory. The report reviewed the environmental stipulations the government sets for each factory, outlined in their business license (which tests they must conduct and the frequency of each test), the result of these tests, and if the government is in fact holding factories accountable for tests results—and in cases of alleged violations, enforcing the law. This report is the first in a series of reports that CFE is planning to publish in the coming two years regarding industries. It focuses on 25 industries in the Western Galilee, for which CFE succeeded in receiving information<sup>2</sup>.

Main points of the report:

1. Most factories in the north do not meet the stipulations set for them in their business license (conduct the required tests, the frequency of the tests, staying within their pollution limits and reporting test results to supervising authorities), both for air pollution and sewage.
2. Most air pollution prevention standards established for factories are outdated and less stringent than worldwide acceptable standards. Further, for many factories, no stipulations were set for air pollution.

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<sup>1</sup> Industrial Silence in Hebrew is *Shecket Ta-assi'ati*. This is an idiom used colloquially to refer to a significant problem with real impact, which is well recognized, but not publically acknowledged.

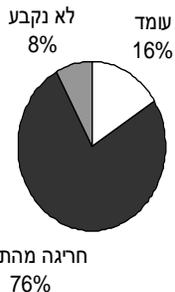
<sup>2</sup> From a very long list. See more details in the introduction and a description of the process of gathering the information, and the difficulties in doing so.

2. However, for sewage, the limits do abide with the global standards.
3. There is no government office that enforces the law and keeps the factories liable by the conditions set in their business license. By law, the Ministry of Environmental Protection is to fulfill this role. However, due to an insufficient budget they are unable to carry out this task. Many times the Ministry does not have business licenses or test records of factories on file. The result is a loss of their credibility and erosion of their authority, which damages their deterring ability against factories, as well as their capability to manage, when necessary, legal proceedings against polluting factories.
4. There is no systematic data collection by government officials concerning the factories. Moreover, most of the information held by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the various authorities is not available on computers or on their websites, making access to any available information very difficult.
5. Citizens who are interested to know pollution records and environmental activities of factories close to their residence have no one to approach. In most cases they will have to contact several authorities and wait for a few months until they receive reliable information, if they receive any at all.

It is important to emphasize that:

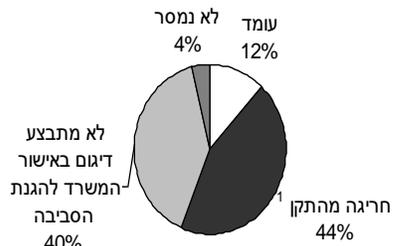
1. Implications of these conclusions are not limited to the north. The situation is the same throughout the country. The conclusions are also not restricted to a period of time. Some pollutants are highly toxic substances that will remain in the ecosystem and continue to harm the population years after the violation has been made. Moreover, these environmental hazards often have wide implications over the whole ecosystem, creating oftentimes a complex chain of events. For example, polluted water harms the photosynthesis process in vegetation, thereby harming the process of oxygen production, and results in reduced oxygen levels.
2. Incompatible pollution limits with world standards and lack of oversight and enforcement, means that the factories get very wide financial benefits at the expense of public health.

**abidance with the effluent standard**

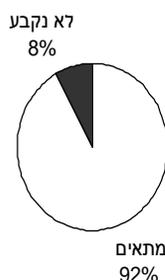


<sup>2</sup> חריגה מהתקן

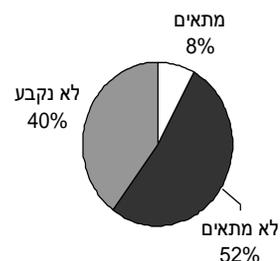
**abidance with the air**



**Effluent standards**



**air standard**



1. Out of the 44% of factories that violated standards, one factory withstood the standards, however the examination wasn't conducted in accordance with the terms of his license and therefore he is in the category of "violated standards".
2. Four factories out of the 76% that violated standards are factories that were found to withstand those standards however the examinations were not conducted in accordance to the terms of their license and therefore they were placed in the category of "violated standards".

The goal of this report is to create a change in the government regulatory agencies and within industry to repair and improve their conduct, i.e., strengthen environmental regulation, enforcement and oversight and ultimately reduce industrial pollution. CFE will continue working in a variety of other ways as well to meet this goal. The recommendations of the report are aimed to authorities, factories, workers and the public<sup>3</sup>. Because the Ministry of Environmental Protection has the most of the authorities legally to enforce environmental laws and oversee industrial pollution practices, and they are doing an inadequate job, it is of utmost importance to improve its conduct in order to utilize to the fullest authorities of old and new legislation.