

Fresh health fears as Rome rubbish crisis intensifies

October 2 2019



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Italian officials warned Wednesday Rome's burgeoning garbage crisis constituted a health risk, as rat control services worked overtime and the waste collection company board resigned.

The board of Ama, the [rubbish](#) collection company that in recent years has been dogged by inefficiency and corruption scandals, stepped down Monday over a dispute with the city council—just 100 days after it took over.

The previous board had been sacked in February by Rome mayor Virginia Raggi, who has come under intense pressure for the Eternal City's overflowing bins, which regularly attract seagulls, [rats](#) and, in some suburbs, wild boar.

"The chaos in which Ama finds itself, with the umpteenth resignation of the umpteenth Board of Directors... worries Rome's Order of Doctors", the organisation's president and deputy, Antonio Magi and Pierluigi Bartoletti, said in a note.

"Piles of rubbish in every street, near schools, hospitals, public places... risk creating a health emergency," they said.

Anaci, the national association of condominium administrators, said Monday it had received 12,000 requests for rodent exterminations between May and September—three times more than it usually does over the summer period.

Rome's chief physician Antonio Magi had issued a "hygiene alert" in July, telling AFP there was a risk of disease spreading through the faeces of insects and animals banqueting on rotting waste.

Big problems

The capital only has one waste processing plant, which is buckling under the strain.

"Within 15 days the city is going to have big problems," Ama's outgoing

managing director Paolo Longoni said Wednesday.

Longoni and his fellow board members' departures marks the sixth time the board has changed in three years.

Raggi, a member of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, became the capital's first female mayor in 2016 by tapping into anger over corruption scandals—in particular the infiltration of crime families in the city's waste management system.

In April this year she defended herself against accusations she had failed to turn the situation around, saying Rome was "under attack" from mobsters determined not to release their grip on a lucrative sector.

Her comments followed several large blazes at waste treatment plants and hundreds of bins set alight across the city.

Crime families in Italy have long held control over large parts of the country's waste management systems.

In 2014 the capital was shaken by revelations that the city administration had, for years, been infiltrated by a mafia-style network which syphoned off millions of euros destined for public services.

The criminal network run by a one-eyed mobster with links to the far right was dubbed "Mafia Capitale" by the media.

Italy's anti-corruption body in 2015 warned Rome lacked the "antibodies" necessary to fight the infiltration of gangsters.

Opposition parties were quick Wednesday to call for Raggi's head to roll, saying the Five Star, which governs Italy in a coalition, was running the capital city into the ground in an international embarrassment for

Italy.

© 2019 AFP

Citation: Fresh health fears as Rome rubbish crisis intensifies (2019, October 2) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-10-fresh-health-rome-rubbish-crisis.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.