



**Minnesota
Pollution
Control
Agency**

What is Waste Reduction?

==== Hazardous Waste Division Fact Sheet #2.60 July 1993 =====

Waste reduction means decreasing the amount of hazardous or solid waste your company generates.

Waste reduction includes source reduction and recycling practices. Source reduction activities attempt to eliminate waste or reduce the amount generated. Recycling activities focus on re-using wastes after they are generated.

Waste reduction will help your business:

- *save money by reducing waste disposal costs*
- *reduce the number of hazardous waste regulations with which your business needs to comply*
- *reduce employee exposure to hazardous chemicals*

WASTE REDUCTION REQUIREMENTS

If your company is a large-quantity generator or you operate a treatment, storage or disposal facility, you are required by federal regulations to have a waste reduction program in place. You must also certify on your hazardous waste shipping manifests that your company has made a serious effort to generate less waste.

You are not required to have a program in place if your company is a small quantity generator. However, you must certify that your company has made a good-faith effort to generate less waste.

What Your Company Can Do

To be successful, a waste reduction program should be well organized. Take the following steps to organize your company's waste reduction efforts:

Gather Support

Obtain top management support and company-wide commitment to reduce wastes.

Look at Your Current Wastes

Determine what types of waste your company generates, how they are generated, and how much is generated. This will help identify which wastes might be reduced or eliminated by making one or more changes.

Ask Employees

Your employees are one of your best resources for waste reduction ideas.

Set Goals

Prepare a written plan which identifies your company's waste reduction goals and objectives.

Check the Rules

Before implementing any waste reduction practice, make certain it will comply with all federal, state, and local regulations.

Test it First

Since many waste reduction practices are process and product specific, investigate ideas on a small scale or trial basis before implementing them company-wide.

WASTE REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

Good Operating Practices

Good operating practices generate less waste by making existing processes more efficient. Therefore, they are also good business practices. Since many good operating practices are easy and inexpensive to implement, they are practical for businesses of all sizes.

Material Substitution

Using nonhazardous or less hazardous materials in products and services can reduce or even eliminate waste generation. If you're thinking about a substitute, be sure to obtain a Material Safety Data Sheet. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency can help you determine how any industrial wastes must be managed.

Process or Technology Modification

Production changes that can decrease your company's generation of wastes include:

- changing the production process
- changing the placement or layout of equipment
- replacing existing equipment with more efficient models
- automating the production process

Product Substitution

You can make changes to produce nonhazardous or less-hazardous products. Less waste is generated in producing nonhazardous products and in storing, shipping, or using the product itself.

Waste Concentration

Equipment such as sludge dryers or filter presses remove water from wastes, as well as reducing their volume and weight.

Recovery/Recycling/Reuse

You can recover useful materials from your wastes. Waste solvents from one process may be clean enough to use in another process. Large and small distillation units are available commercially for on-site solvent reclamation, and services are available for off-site reclamation. The impurities are removed from the solvents by distillation, making them re-usable.

Your trash may be another business' treasure. Another company may be able to use material that your company considers waste. Waste exchange programs are available that link companies with wastes with other companies interested in using those wastes.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD OPERATING PRACTICES
Buy only what you need
Use materials in a "first in/first out" manner.
Separate different types of waste to promote recycling
Make sure equipment is working properly and efficiently
Prevent leaks and spills by inspecting containers regularly, using pumps or spigots to dispense materials, and training employees to handle materials properly.

For more information about waste reduction, please call:

Minnesota Technical Assistance Program
(MnTAP) (612) 627-4646
(800) 247-0015 toll-free in Minnesota
Confidential assistance to industries with waste management concerns.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
(612) 296-6300
(800) 657-3864 toll-free in Minnesota
Ask for waste reduction information.

Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance
(612) 296-3417
Ask for waste reduction and recycle/reuse information.

Other sources of information include the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, trade associations, professional groups, equipment and chemical vendors, business assistance organizations, academic institutions, professional consultants, and waste exchanges.

We appreciate your comments on this and other MPCA publications.