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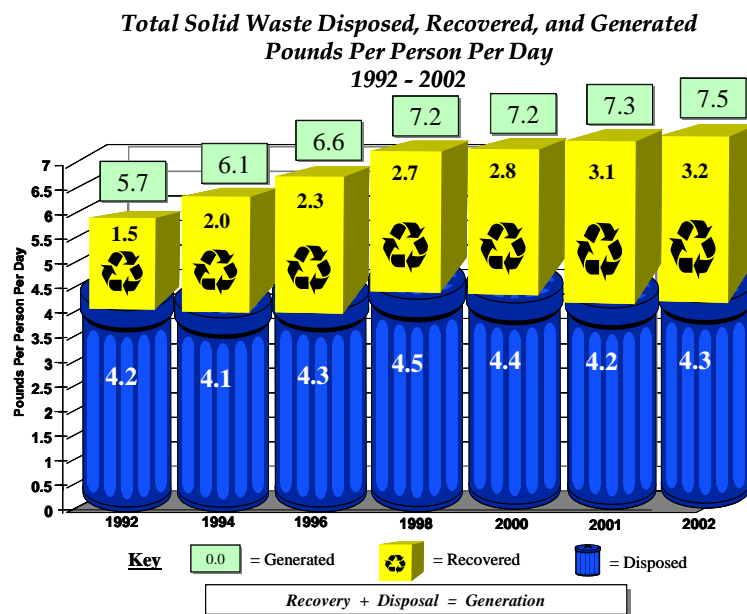
Background Brief on...

Solid and Hazardous Wastes

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Background

During the mid-1600's the City of New York instituted the nation's first waste disposal regulations when it banned dumping garbage in the streets. Solid and hazardous waste management today protects human health and the environment through proper management, disposal and waste reduction programs. Waste is managed from generation to disposal with an increasing emphasis on waste prevention, recycling, and improved handling of special wastes. Solid waste in Oregon is principally managed by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and state solid waste law. RCRA authorizes states to implement hazardous waste management programs with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approval. The DEQ administers waste management requirements in Oregon with EPA oversight. Key program elements include environmental permitting for waste management and disposal facilities, inspections, enforcement, and technical assistance to businesses and local governments.



Solid Waste Management

Solid waste is defined as “all useless or discarded putrescible and nonputrescible materials” excluding hazardous waste (discussed below) and materials applied to the land for fertilizer or other agricultural amendments below agronomic application rates. Oregon’s first solid waste management plan was adopted in 1979. Open dumping of solid waste is prohibited in Oregon with disposal confined to permitted facilities. Hazardous and infectious waste streams are not accepted by standard landfills and require special handling. Oregon statutes ban the disposal of lead-acid batteries, used oil, whole tires, discarded vehicles, and large, metal-jacketed appliances. Some landfills accept only yard debris and inert materials or construction and demolition waste.

Under the state’s solid waste program, DEQ issues disposal permits and monitors compliance, administers solid waste grants, oversees local government recycling regulations, conducts household hazardous waste-collection events, and provides education about waste prevention and recycling. Local governments in Oregon are responsible for planning for solid waste management and must provide the opportunity to recycle to every person in their jurisdiction. Most local governments contract for residential garbage and recycling collection services, while some also regulate commercial garbage and recycling collection services.

Oregon’s current (1995-2005) Solid Waste Management Plan changes the state’s focus from only conserving landfill space to viewing waste and recyclables as valuable resources with the ultimate goals of conserving natural resources and reducing the environmental impacts associated with resource consumption. The 2001 Legislature placed these policy goals in statute and extended the state’s 50 percent recovery goal to 2009. In addition, two waste prevention goals were set:

- For the calendar year 2005 and subsequent years, there will be no annual increase in per capita municipal solid waste generation
- For the calendar year 2009 and subsequent years, there will be no annual increase in total municipal solid waste generation

In addition to emphasizing commercial waste prevention as a focus area for grants to local governments and for technical assistance to businesses and local governments, DEQ developed a statewide strategy to guide waste prevention and reuse activities in Oregon to achieve these new waste prevention goals.

An increasingly important solid waste reduction issue is how to manage electronics waste. A task force created by legislation (SB 867) in the 2003 session is studying this problem. Oregon DEQ also has been an active partner in the National Electronics Product Stewardship Initiative that is

seeking a product-stewardship-based solution to handling electronics waste.

Oregon is a national leader in recycling. The Bottle Bill (1971) resulted in a 90 percent capture of carbonated beverage containers and an 80 percent reduction in roadside litter within two years of passage. Recycling is further encouraged through the Recycling Opportunity Act (1983) calling for curbside recycling and drop-off depots and the Oregon Recycling Act (1991) requiring the state to purchase recycled products. For additional information, refer to the Background Brief on Recycling.

A small but important part of Oregon’s solid waste management program is the household hazardous waste (HHW) program. This program focuses on education and provides grants to local governments to help them establish permanent HHW collection facilities. Under this program rules were developed for the labeling of mercury-containing thermometers as required by legislation passed in 2001.

Hazardous Waste Management

In 1984, amendments to the federal RCRA added special requirements for the handling of hazardous wastes including managing the generation, transportation, storage, treatment, and disposal of these materials. The EPA approved Oregon’s hazardous waste program in 1986 and updated this authorization in 2002 allowing Oregon to implement federal requirements. The EPA, however, retains federal oversight authority. The Oregon Legislature adopted a statewide hazardous waste program to protect “the public health and safety and environment of Oregon to the maximum extent possible” (ORS 466.010). Hazardous waste generation, transport, storage and disposal on Tribal lands fall under federal jurisdiction.

The DEQ promotes the reduction and safe management of hazardous waste at more than 2000 hazardous waste generation facilities, issues permits to waste management facilities, conducts inspections of hazardous waste handlers and used oil processors, and assists Oregon small businesses in complying with complex federal regulations.

Recent Legislation

Senate Bill 867 (2003) created an Advisory Committee on Electronic Products Stewardship.

Senate Bill 196 (2003) set hazardous waste generator fees to allow DEQ to continue implementing the federal hazardous waste rules in Oregon.

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