



# Managing Hazardous Waste In Your Community



The primary role of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect human health and safeguard the environment. A part of this protection involves managing our nation's waste. This wastestream includes trash and garbage produced by households as well as materials discarded by commercial and industrial operations. A portion of this commercial and industrial wastestream is composed of hazardous waste. Wastes are considered hazardous by EPA if they exhibit certain characteristics or if they have been placed on a list of hazardous wastes. EPA makes sure that hazardous wastes are safely managed through the development of regulations under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

## History

In 1976, Congress enacted RCRA to address the problems associated with waste management and disposal. After World War II, industrial growth and consumer demand for new products increased dramatically in the United States. With the demand for and use of new products made of plastic, nylon, paper, and aluminum goods, came an increase in waste generation. At the end of World War II, about 500,000 metric tons of hazardous waste were generated yearly in the United States. Current estimates place the annual generation rate at 279 million metric tons. Congress tasked EPA with creating regulations under RCRA governing the safe management of the huge volumes of municipal and industrial waste being generated in the United States.

The RCRA statute as it appears today was developed over time. The following are the major laws and amendments that are collectively known today as RCRA:

- 1965 Solid Waste Disposal Act
- 1970 Resource Recovery Act
- 1976 **Resource Conservation and Recovery Act**
- 1984 Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments.

## The RCRA Statute

To meet the goals of RCRA, Congress divided the RCRA statute into subtitles to address particular aspects of waste generation and management:

- Subtitle C contains regulations for management of hazardous wastes.
- Subtitle D establishes criteria for disposal of solid (mainly nonhazardous) wastes, such as household wastes.

## Goals of RCRA

- To protect human health and the environment
  - To reduce waste while conserving energy and natural resources
  - To reduce or eliminate the generation of hazardous waste
- Subtitle I contains regulations for the management of underground storage tanks storing hazardous substances (e.g., methanol) and petroleum products (e.g., diesel fuel).

The enclosed fact sheets summarize the **hazardous** waste program under Subtitle C.

## “Cradle-to-Grave” Management

The Subtitle C program establishes management standards in a “cradle-to-grave” system. Hazardous wastes are regulated from the point of generation (“cradle”) until final deposition (“grave”) to ensure protection of human health and the environment. In order to ensure safe management of hazardous waste, EPA has developed regulations for hazardous waste generation, transportation, treatment, storage, and disposal.

## Purpose of This Folder

The purpose of this folder is to provide education and outreach to the general public about EPA's hazardous waste management program under RCRA. The enclosed fact sheets provide a basic overview of EPA's hazardous waste regulations, and the folder includes regional and state hazardous waste contacts. For more information on the hazardous waste regulations, you may contact the RCRA Hotline at 800 424-9346, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

To find out more about EPA's hazardous waste program, consult the following resources:

**RCRA, Superfund & EPCRA Hotline**

800 424-9346 or TDD 800 553-7672

In the Washington, DC area: 703 412-9810  
or TDD 703 412-3323

Web site: [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hotline](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hotline)

**Other Internet Resources**

EPA's Office of Solid Waste Web site:

[www.epa.gov/osw](http://www.epa.gov/osw)

**Additional Documents (ordering information available from the RCRA, Superfund & EPCRA Hotline):**

- *Code of Federal Regulations, Title 40, Parts 260-299*
- *RCRA Orientation Manual* (EPA530-R-98-004)
- *RCRA: Reducing Risk from Waste* (EPA530-K-97-004)
- *Understanding the Hazardous Waste Rules: A Handbook for Small Businesses* (EPA530-K-95-001)



United States Environmental Protection Agency  
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