



HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT – PART 3

Thank you for joining us once again, as discussed in last week's article hazardous waste is waste or a combination of wastes which, because of its quantity, concentration or physical, chemical or infectious characteristics, may pose a substantial hazard to human health and the environment. Such waste may be flammable, oxidising, poisonous, corrosive, infectious, ecotoxic, etc.

Hazardous Waste Regulations and the Basel Convention

The EPA under the Environmental Protection Act, Chapter 20:05, Laws of Guyana, and the Environmental Protection (Hazardous Waste Management) Regulations 2000, is mandated to oversee the management of hazardous waste. Guyana is also a signatory to the Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their disposal, and the EPA is the National Focal Point in the country for the Convention. This is mandates the EPA to ensure the protection of human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous waste across borders.

Notice of Activity – Getting Authorised

According to the Hazardous Waste Management Regulations, anyone who operates or proposes to operate a facility that generates, transports, treats, stores or disposes of hazardous waste, is required to submit a **Notification of Activity** and an application to the Agency for an Environmental Authorisation. The **Notice of Activity** will inform the Agency of the nature of the activities at the facility and will aid in guiding its decision on whether or not Environmental Authorisation is required. Application forms for Environmental Authorisation are available on the Agency's website and at our **Georgetown, Berbice and Linden offices.**

Here is what should be submitted in the Notice:

- ✓ Name, address, email, telephone number and fax number of the applicant;
- ✓ Generators of the waste and the site of generation;
- ✓ Disposer of the waste and size of disposal;

- ✓ Designation and physical description of the waste and its composition and information on the special handling requirements including emergency provisions in case of accidents;
- ✓ Types of packaging envisaged (e.g. bulk, drummed, etc.) for storage, accumulation etc.;
- ✓ Estimated quantity weight and volume;
- ✓ Process by which waste is generated;
- ✓ Information concerning the contract between the transporter, disposer as the case may be; and
- ✓ Information relating to insurance.

Offences and Penalties

Notifying the Agency of your plans to generate, store, handle or dispose of hazardous waste is the first step in the right direction. It is an offence to store, treat, transport, and dispose of in an open dump, import hazardous waste or cause contamination from such waste, with penalties ranging from \$30, 000 to \$2, 000, 000 and imprisonment up to five years. Penalties may be doubled in the case of corporate bodies.

Common Waste Management Practices

Waste management is costly and different types of wastes are managed differently depending on their nature and potential impact. Common means of waste disposal utilized today include land-filling and incineration (burning).

Land-filling is widely used and once properly designed and managed can be cost efficient and environmentally friendly. However, poor designs and inefficient management of landfills can result in many negative impacts – both for the environment and humans. These impacts may involve scattering of litter by heavy winds, leaching of harmful chemicals into the soil and groundwater supply and the prevalence of vermin which could increase the spread of disease.

Incineration or burning of household waste is a common waste disposal method in Guyana especially in rural communities; incineration is also done on an industrial scale where treatment of waste occurs before final disposal. However, much controversy has been raised on this method of disposal due to the release of pollutants and greenhouse

gases into the air. *The burning of substances such as plastics, Styrofoam and paint is particularly dangerous to human health.*

Recovery including recycling is by far the most effective means of waste management. Most of the waste that is produced in everyday life can be recycled. Importantly many of the items that are recycled are non-biodegradable waste products such as plastics; materials that degrade slowly like tin and aluminum are recycled too.

3 'Rs'

To maintain a healthy environment every member of society must practice and contribute to environmentally safe methods of waste management. The 3 'Rs' of waste management can help us to do this.

- (1) **Reduce** – This is the first positive action we can take as individuals to reduce waste. Reducing the amount of waste we produce every day is a first step. The diagram shows an approximate percentage of waste type thrown out daily. Could we reduce the amount of waste we throw out in the garbage?
- (2) **Reuse** – We can sometimes make use of items for longer durations and also make use of items for other purposes that they were not initially intended for.
- (3) **Recycle** – Recycling is different from reusing as it involves the breakdown of a material to make something completely new. For example, cardboard is recycled to make paper and plastic bottles are recycled to make bags.

Here are some actions you can take to support the 3 'Rs' of waste management:

- Buy products with less packaging;
- Use re-usable shopping bags instead of plastic bags;
- Reuse plastic bags and bottles;
- Donate toys and clothes to orphanages, or have a yard sale instead of throwing them in the trash; and

- Try composting at home to reduce kitchen and yard waste, turning it into fertile soil – compost, for use in kitchen gardens.

REMEMBER TO GET AUTHORIZED!

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth. Our Environment,” C/O ECEA Programme, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, Georgetown, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.