

Taking Charge!

Managing Your Environment for a Sustainable Future

Hello readers, welcome to another edition. Today, we will be talking about managing your environment.

The current state of our environment in Guyana is disheartening. Whether you are walking through the bustling streets of one of our towns or taking a drive through our 'serene' countryside, there is always an ever-present build-up of litter or waste. It seems that we have the uncanny ability to create a dumpsite where one should not exist. We all have sat in minibuses, taxis, or our private vehicles and witnessed individuals discarding wrappers, bottles, and even full bags of garbage onto public roads and streets with little to no thought of the consequences. Another saddening issue is waking up and driving to work in what appears to be fog but is thick smoke as a result of the careless actions of some citizens.

Who is responsible for managing our environment? Textbooks will tell you that managing the environment is the responsibility of multiple stakeholders. The private sector has a social responsibility to consider the interests of various parties, including employees, consumers, suppliers, competitors, government, community, and most importantly, the environment. They should adopt proactive measures to assist in environmental management and protection. The government and agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency play a crucial role in environmental management by implementing regulations and holding accountable those who neglect their obligations to preserve the environment. Additionally, individuals (YOU) have a responsibility to contribute to environmental protection through their actions and choices. It is discouraging when individuals remove themselves from responsibility, claiming that our environmental problems are solely to be fixed by the government or the local regulators.

Furthermore, this way of thinking is effectively illustrated by the concept of "the Tragedy of the Commons." This is a concept that highlights the inevitable degradation of shared resources (the environment) when individuals act solely in their self-interest, without considering the collective impact on the common resource. It demonstrates how choices made by individuals can collectively result in a negative outcome for entire communities and, by extension, the country. Let's consider littering, open burning, and illegal dumping. The individuals participating in these acts think that their contribution to the overall problem is negligible, but when multiplied across many people, the cumulative effects are significant. When you do these acts, you are exploiting the shared environment for your convenience without considering the long-term consequences of your action. These may include environmental pollution, reduced air quality, health hazards such as allergens. As individuals within Guyana's society, it is time for a change and for us all to begin to foster a sense of individual social responsibility.

Individual Social Responsibility is where we as individuals recognize and take direct action towards remedying social and environmental issues. It simply means that as individuals, we endeavour to develop habits and behaviours that do not affect the environment and by extension have no negative impacts on the persons around us.

In light of the foregoing, it is your individual social responsibility to manage your waste generation and disposal methods, noise nuisance, and air pollution. It is our responsibility to recognize our impact on the world around us and take proactive steps to minimize our negative effects.

The following are some EPA-approved positive changes that can be implemented today:

- 1. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle-** Adopt the "3 Rs" approach to waste management. Reduce consumption by choosing products with minimal packaging and opting for reusable items instead of single-use ones. Reuse items whenever possible, and start thinking about how you can recycle materials such as paper, plastic, glass, and metal to divert waste from landfills.
- 2. Proper Disposal-** We are going to produce waste; however, we can dispose of waste responsibly by using designated bins and waste collection services. Be mindful of hazardous waste such as batteries, electronics, and chemicals, and dispose of them according to local regulations.
- 3. Composting-** Convert organic waste, such as food scraps and yard trimmings, into nutrient-rich compost for use in gardens and landscaping. Composting reduces the volume of waste sent to landfills and helps enrich soil health.
- 4. Respect Quiet Hours-** Be considerate of noise level standards, especially during designated quiet hours in residential areas.
- 5. Use Noise-Reducing Measures-** Employ noise-reducing techniques such as installing soundproofing materials in buildings, enclosing workshops to minimize noises from compressors, welding machines, impact drills, etc., using noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs, and maintaining equipment such as generators, compressors, to minimize noise emissions.
- 6. Noise Permit-** Apply for a Long-Term or Short-Term Noise Permit from the Environmental Protection Agency when hosting parties, barbecues, fairs, and if you have a club or bar. When playing music, always be mindful of the persons in your vicinity.
- 7. Open Communication-** Communicate with neighbours about planned activities that may generate noise, such as home renovations or parties, and strive to reach mutually agreeable solutions to minimize disturbances.
- 8. Emissions Control-** Use equipment and machinery with low emissions to reduce air pollution during construction activities. Employ technologies such as particulate filters and exhaust scrubbers to minimize the release of harmful pollutants into the air.
- 9. Dust Suppression-** Implement dust control measures, such as watering down construction sites and covering materials, to prevent the spread of airborne dust particles.

Each of us must take ownership of our actions and their impact on the environment. By implementing these changes in our daily lives, we can contribute to a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future for Guyana. Let us heed this call to action and work together to manage our environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O Communications Department, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at:

communications@epaguyana.org Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel.