

World Waste Management

Waste management differs from country to country, province to province and town to town. A complete list of every method could fill a set of encyclopedias. Instead of trying to explain each approach, we will look at common trends and unique examples throughout the world.

Developing countries are trying to implement official waste management policies and practices, especially in the area of recycling. However, the most effective methods may already be in use.

Poorer people have little waste to start; material is reduced, reused and recycled to the fullest out of economic necessity. In India, entire villages survive on landfills. People build homes and furniture, make clothes, get fuel, generate income and even find food from wealthier citizens' trash. Entrepreneurs from the slums of Rio De Janeiro turn old bottles into glasses and vases. People in the Philippines give recyclables to men who shout from the street. These "announced collectors", as they are called, work for dealers who sell the material for profit. Not only does this home grown waste management reduce waste, it creates an informal economy (creating jobs). Unfortunately, child labour is sometimes used; these children are sometimes abused and mistreated.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, we were allowed to see the effects communism (socialism) had on many nations. We have all heard of the economic dilemma these people faced, but what about their waste? In Poland, landfilling was the main waste disposal technique. A few truck loads of garbage would be dumped at the first suitable location. Government officials would see this "dump" on a map and legalize it. There was generally no site inspection, no samples taken, nothing. Of the country's 681 landfills, 50% did not meet Polish environmental requirements. Landfills had no liners and no leachate or methane collection/control systems. Waste was not separated nor was hazardous waste controlled.

Today some cities are trying recycling and other separation methods on a small scale. The tough economic climate has slowed the purchase and implementation of modern waste management technology and techniques. Poland and its sister countries of the old Eastern Bloc have seen some help arrive as western European companies begin to tap into these newly liberated waste markets.

However, western Europe is not without its own problems. Space for the disposal of waste is limited. In order to combat this situation, incineration is used. For years, garbage has been reduced to ash and smoke. Recent research and development have created cleaner burning facilities that produce energy for heating and

