

WASTE OVERVIEW

Glossary

ACID RAIN: precipitation with a higher than normal degree of acidity due to the absorption of sulphur dioxide gas and nitrous oxides.

AEROBIC: taking place in the presence of oxygen.

AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT: an intellectual movement of 18th century Europe which questioned traditional beliefs and prejudices. This movement also introduced the use of strict scientific method.

AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION: the relatively abrupt change, which first occurred an estimated 10,000 years ago, involving domestication of plants and animals.

ANAEROBIC: taking place in the absence of oxygen.

BIODEGRADABLE: a term describing a substance or material which can be broken down into simpler compounds by micro-organisms.

BLUE BOX: a blue plastic container distributed to households. Most Blue Boxes are made of recycled plastic and can be recycled.

CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS: a chemical composed of chlorine, fluorine and carbon atoms. CFC's breakdown the stratospheric ozone faster than it can be naturally replaced.

DEGREE OF ACIDITY: a measure of the effective concentration of hydrogen ions in a solution of a given substance. Acidity is measured on a pH scale, with pH 14 being alkaline, pH 7 neutral and pH 1 as very acidic.

ECOSYSTEMS: the interacting system of a biological community and its nonliving surroundings.

EFFLUENT: liquid waste (i.e. leachate, sewage).

FOSSIL FUELS: fuels from once-living matter; for example, coal, petroleum or natural gas.

GLOBAL WARMING: an increase in temperature around the world caused by the build up of carbon dioxide in the air.

GREENHOUSE EFFECT: describes the build-up in the atmosphere of pollutant gases which will not allow heat coming from the earth to escape into space.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: the mechanization of industry and the consequent changes in social and economic organization.

INFRARED RADIATION: electromagnetic waves of length greater than visible light and perceived as heat.

LANDFILL(S): a pit or depression in the Earth's surface into which garbage is placed. Old landfills were called dumps. Modern landfills are engineered for safety.