United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Solid Waste and
Emergency Response
(OS-305)

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Office of Solid Waste

EPA

Environmental Fact Sheet

PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE HAZARDOUS WASTE RECYCLING PROGRAM

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed a program under which certain widespread post-user items that are hazardous wastes would be collected under greatly streamlined requirements, to facilitate separation of these materials from the municipal solid waste stream and to encourage proper treatment and/or recycling.

Background

Recent changes in the regulations addressing methods for identifying hazardous wastes (the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure test, or "TC") have caused many people to begin testing the toxicity of commonly produced waste items. These items, which previously may not have been considered to be hazardous (such as nickel cadmium batteries, and pesticides) may exhibit the toxicity characteristic and thus may be subject to regulation as hazardous wastes. How to ensure the proper management of such wastes continues to be an unresolved issue.

These "universal" wastes are characterized by being generated in many different settings and in vast quantities, typically destined for the municipal solid waste stream. They are produced by households and small businesses as well as large industrial operations, and they are not readily amenable to the comprehensive management requirements of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Currently, if these wastes are produced by a regulated hazardous waste generator, they are subject to RCRA control. If the wastes are generated by households or conditionally exempt small quantity generators, they are not subject to RCRA.

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