



# **Statement of Michael Shapiro, Director of the Office of Solid Waste**

## **Strategy for Hazardous Waste Minimization and Combustion**



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**OFFICE OF SOLID WASTE**

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And Combustion**

Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing its Strategy for Hazardous Waste Minimization and Combustion. The Strategy was released in draft eighteen months ago by Administrator Browner as an effort to focus attention on one of the Agency's top priorities--pollution prevention--and to significantly improve and strengthen controls governing hazardous waste combustion units. This Strategy represents a major milestone in the Agency's ongoing commitment to determine, in the context of our national hazardous waste management program, how best to integrate source reduction, environmentally sound recycling, and hazardous waste combustion and how best to assure the public of safe operation of hazardous waste combustion facilities. The Strategy is the culmination of 18 months of intensive effort by EPA and other interested parties.

The Strategy sets forth EPA's fundamental goals and basic vision with respect to several key areas. First, the Strategy, in combination with the Hazardous Waste Minimization National Plan also being released today, discusses the role of waste minimization in the RCRA hazardous waste management program. Second, the Strategy addresses the role of combustion. In addition, the Strategy presents EPA's views on expanded public involvement in the RCRA decision-making process, the need for

strong compliance and enforcement, and the role of risk assessment in the permitting of hazardous waste combustion facilities.

I'd like to highlight a few of the strategic directions which EPA has developed over the past eighteen months through an extensive and open process to solicit views from all affected groups:

- EPA has a strong preference for source reduction over waste management and places a particularly high priority on reducing the quantities of persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic hazardous waste constituents.
- EPA believes that safe and effective combustion has an important role in the management of hazardous waste. However, the Agency also believes it should foster commercial development and the use of alternative treatment and other innovative technologies that are safe and effective.
- EPA will ensure that combustion and other treatment technologies reduce toxicity, volume, and/or mobility of hazardous wastes in a manner that is protective of public health and is preparing stringent new air emissions regulation to support this goal.

- EPA is committed to enhancing public involvement opportunities in the process for considering permit applications for combustion facilities and making sure that local communities are fully informed about the RCRA decision-making process (including waste minimization opportunities).
- EPA and states will continue comprehensive compliance and enforcement efforts against hazardous-waste burning facilities while working with industry to ensure that EPA's regulations are understood and followed. We also want to enhance public confidence by promoting public understanding of these activities and by increasing opportunities for public involvement in the enforcement process.

EPA and other stakeholders share two fundamental priorities: (1) to foster the maximum amount of source reduction and environmentally sound recycling for all wastes (not just combustible waste); and (2) to ensure that any waste management practices, including combustion, are done in a manner that is fully protective of human health and the environment.

With regard to our first shared priority, EPA's waste minimization approach is presented in detail in our National Plan. The National Plan has been subject to public evaluation since its release in draft form in May 1994. This Plan creates

the framework for the waste minimization activities under RCRA and will guide the Agency's efforts to integrate waste minimization into the other facets of our national waste management program. EPA's goals are to reduce the most persistent, bioaccumulative, and/or toxic constituents in hazardous waste by 25% nationally by the year 2000, and by 50% nationally by the year 2005. These goals are meant to be applied flexibly, and to complement rather than duplicate or compete with existing industry voluntary efforts to reduce waste and state pollution prevention programs.

The National Waste Minimization Plan is organized around five objectives. First, to develop a framework for setting national priorities, to develop a flexible screening tool for identifying priorities at individual facilities, and to identify constituents of concern. Second, to promote multimedia environmental benefits and prevent cross-media transfers. Third, to demonstrate a strong preference for source reduction, shifting attention to the nation's hazardous waste generators to reduce hazardous waste generation at its source. Fourth, to clearly define and track progress and promote accountability for EPA, states, and industry. And fifth, to involve citizens in waste minimization implementation decisions.

EPA is approaching our second shared priority through multiple related actions. First, EPA will develop and promulgate rules that impose more rigorous controls on combustion facilities based on an assessment of available technologies and the most current science. The proposed rule is scheduled for September 1995, with a final rule scheduled for December 1996. The intent is to develop this rule in a coordinated manner under both RCRA and the Clean Air Act authorities. EPA will encourage all combustion facilities to implement the proposed standards to reduce emissions as quickly as possible, and will itself examine how to implement the final rule in a manner that achieves the greatest possible immediate reduction in dioxin, furan, and metal emissions at all hazardous waste combustion facilities.

Another approach is being taken through giving top priority to those facilities for which a final permit decision would result in the greatest environmental benefits to the surrounding community or the greatest reduction in overall risk to the public. Permit renewals can be included in this high priority category. This means that the Agency will maintain its current policy of lower priority for work on applications involving new, non-replacement combustion facilities.

The Strategy also maintains the current policy that a risk assessment, including indirect exposure pathways, should be performed prior to a final permit decision. The Agency will continue availability of Headquarter-Regional Risk Assessment Review Team in scoping, performing, and/or reviewing risk assessments.

In addition, a group of proactive companies and organizations have come forward to voluntarily work with us to meet some of our objectives without regulatory or other mandatory requirements. One of the efforts that is being vigorously pursued, both inside and outside EPA, is to test continuous emission monitors (CEMs) for toxic organics and metals and to stimulate their commercial availability and use as soon as possible. The goal is to have these CEMs installed at hazardous waste combustion facilities as soon as possible in a manner that affords public access to the monitoring results.

As part of ensuring protective management of hazardous wastes, high priority also is being given to emphasize the public's right-to-know. By summer 1995, EPA is scheduled to finalize the rule to enhance general public involvement opportunities in the process for considering permit applications for combustion and other RCRA facilities, and to better address limiting operations at facilities that fail trial burns during interim status. Also, with respect to waste minimization activities at generating facilities and at combustion facilities, EPA will provide enhanced level of information to the public and stakeholder groups through newsletter and electronic media. As an example of this, EPA recently released its 1991 Biennial Report which identifies those large quantity generators who were required to certify that they have a waste minimization program in place. EPA also will explore use of information outreach programs and technical assistance.



Although I have not been able to cover all of the goals or action items in much detail, it is important that we work with all stakeholders to integrate these activities and achieve a balance in our implementation of the Strategy.

Finally, I want to stress that the completion of this eighteen month waste minimization and combustion policy review, and this issuance of our Strategy, represents a beginning not an ending. Most of the hard work of implementation lies ahead. The Strategy itself should be viewed as a living document, which we will periodically reopen based on our experience in implementation and upon the continued input from the public.





