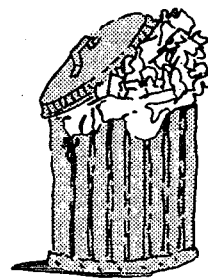




# REUSABLE NEWS



## The Wisdom of Waste Reduction at McDonald's

**M**cDonald's is not spending more money as a result of its waste reduction program, just spending it more wisely, according to Robert Langert, Director of Environmental Affairs at McDonald's Corporation. The program originated in 1990 with the formation of a Waste Reduction Task Force. A year later, the task force received a Presidential Environment and Conservation Challenge Award for Partnership for fostering cooperative approaches to environmental needs. McDonald's and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) formed the task force to reduce waste at McDonald's through waste prevention, reuse, and recycling (including composting).

The task force's original intentions were to outline waste reduction options for McDonald's to consider. The outcome was a 42-step action plan, a new environmental policy, and the widespread integration of waste reduction considerations throughout McDonald's operations. In fact, the authors of the task force's final report believe that the results far exceeded their expectations and original goals.

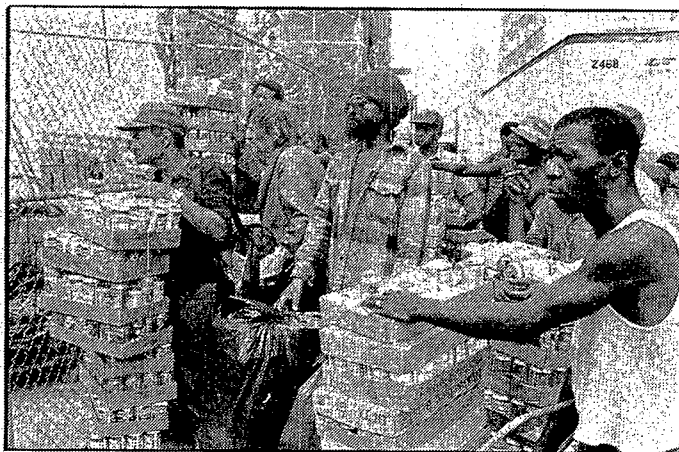
As a direct result of the task force's suggestions, McDonald's is switching from chlorine-bleached paper products to brown, unbleached paper, or paper bleached by a more benign process, wherever feasible. Brown paper bags made of 100 percent recycled materials (50 percent post-consumer) have replaced white bags; oxygen-bleached coffee filters have replaced chlorine-bleached ones; and the Big Mac® packaging is being made with unbleached paper.

(Continued on page 3)

## We Can: Recycling Helps the Homeless to a Better Life

**N**ew York City can be a very tough place for the hundreds of homeless people residing in the city's parks,

eating a meal and going to sleep hungry. Guy Polhemus is working to change all that.



Every day New York's poor and homeless bring thousands of bottles and cans into We Can Redemption Centers where homeless employees sort them and send them off for processing and recycling.

streets, and alleyways. For this frequently overlooked group, shelter from the elements is hard to come by, jobs even harder, and often even a few dollars can make the difference between

"I asked them why they brought their containers with them and didn't redeem them," Polhemus said. He was shocked by the answer he got.

(Continued on page 2)

## Waste Prevention Successes

by Sylvia K. Lowrance, Director, EPA Office of Solid Waste

**E**PA recognizes that individuals, governments, and business and industry all play critical roles in ensuring the safe and effective management of our nation's municipal solid waste.

This issue of *Reusable News* highlights the efforts of several businesses to incorporate innovative waste prevention strategies in their organizations. The institutions profiled range from a large, multinational corporation that identified significant waste prevention steps through the help of a task force, to a local newspaper that found creative ways to reduce waste in every facet of its organization, from the newsroom to the print shop. The breadth of experience conveyed through these success stories attests to the savings—both in waste quantities and in money—that can be obtained through waste prevention efforts. EPA commends these businesses, along with many other institutions and organizations across the country, for making significant strides in waste prevention.



*Reusable News* is printed on paper that contains at least 50 percent recycled fiber.

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**R**eusable News is the quarterly newsletter of the EPA Office of Solid Waste's Municipal and Industrial Solid Waste Division. *Reusable News* reports on the efforts of EPA and others to safely and effectively manage the nation's garbage and provides useful information about key issues and concerns in MSW management. ☐

## We Can: Recycling Helps the Homeless to a Better Life

(Continued from page 1)

Polhemus discovered that, despite New York's "bottle bill" mandating a 5-cent deposit and refund on every can or bottle bought or turned in, almost no store in the city consistently gave the homeless the nickel they deserved for returning beverage containers. Many stores flatly refused to give these individuals any money at all, others accepted only a limited number of containers or paid just 2 or 3 cents per can, and some would accept containers only on certain days of the week.

In response, Polhemus initiated *We Can*, a nonprofit redemption agency that pays the homeless their nickel's worth—and more. Between its two centers in Manhattan, *We Can* has paid out \$4.5 million to New York's poor and diverted more than 10,000 tons of trash from the municipal solid waste stream since opening in 1987. About 500 people redeem containers at *We Can* every day, and in the summer, up to \$20,000 is refunded daily. *We Can* also operates a free collection service for New York businesses that want to donate their cans and bottles instead of throwing them away.

In addition, Polhemus and his colleagues provide the homeless with a

place to work. *We Can* is completely staffed by currently or formerly homeless people; depending on the season, 50 to 100 people find employment at the two redemption centers. Many people, after working a stint at *We Can*, have moved on to full-time jobs elsewhere.

*We Can* further supplements its redemption activities with outreach services; in particular, *We Can* offers information on area shelters and food distribution centers and has an outreach coordinator to assist the homeless with finding jobs and obtaining identification documents. Although the organization currently receives outside funding, Polhemus predicts that within 18 months, *We Can* will achieve complete self-sufficiency in its operations.

Polhemus has shown that one person can initiate significant social change. Through *We Can*, hundreds of people have gotten the opportunity to earn money honestly and, at the same time, help the environment.

For more information, contact Guy Polhemus at *We Can* at (212) 262-2222. ☐

## Handbooks Promote Waste Prevention and Recycling

**A**cross the nation, more and more businesses are considering recycling and waste prevention practices. Yet the information they need to actually launch such programs is sometimes hard to come by. In an attempt to help give businesses the "hands on" tools they need, Keep America Beautiful and INFORM, Inc. have developed guidebooks on commercial recycling and waste prevention.

Keep America Beautiful, whose work has helped over 400 communities in the United States improve their waste management practices, has published a guidebook for small businesses on waste management strategies. The book, entitled *Waste in the Workplace*, provides businesses with simple, straightforward strategies for auditing their waste streams and disposal costs and for analyzing where recycling and waste prevention programs could be implemented. *Waste in the Workplace* is available for \$4.50 plus \$2.50 shipping and handling from Keep America Beautiful, Inc., 9 West Broad Street, Stamford, CT 06902.

INFORM's *Business Recycling Manual* emphasizes how businesses of all types and sizes can recycle operations wastes, from office paper to restaurant waste. The looseleaf-bound workbook guides managers through the entire process, from initial waste audits through dialogues with carters. The comprehensive manual also describes how businesses can work with local waste management companies to make their program effective and even profitable. Copies of the *Business Recycling Manual* are available for \$85 (plus \$5.00 shipping and handling). Contact Wayne Warren, Customer Service, at (212) 689-4040. ☐

# The Wisdom of Waste Reduction at McDonald's

(Continued from page 1)

Other waste reduction techniques are still in the testing phases. For example, McDonald's is working on replacing individual condiment packets with pump-style dispensers. McDonald's also is experimenting with many reusable items, including lids for salads and breakfast entrees, bulk storage containers, shipping containers, coffee filters, and shipping pallets. Testing also is being conducted on the recyclability of items that come in contact with food, such as sandwich wrappers and cups.

In addition, McDonald's currently is recycling corrugated boxes and asking suppliers to use corrugated boxes containing 35 percent recycled content, a new industry standard. Corrugated boxes make up over 1/3 (by weight) of the trash generated at an average McDonald's restaurant. In addition, a pilot project has been initiated to collect and recycle polyethylene packaging used behind the counter (e.g., the plastic bags that contain sandwich buns). To facilitate recycling, McDonald's is making an effort to use plastic resins that are readily recyclable.

McDonald's is effectively closing the recycling loop by purchasing over \$125 million worth of recycled materials annually for construction, renovation, and

restaurant operation, as part of its Mc-Recycle USA program. This program includes a data base of products made from recycled materials that is shared with other interested parties. This is in addition to the more than \$80 million



Jackie Prince of the Environmental Defense Fund receives a Presidential Environmental and Conservation Challenge Award for Partnership by President Bush for the work of the EDF-McDonald's Waste Reduction Task Force.

McDonald's spends annually on recycled paper products for packaging, tray liners, bags, and napkins. In addition to in-house efforts, McDonald's has sent new packaging specifications to its 600 suppliers that address areas such as the use of recycled post-consumer materials and non-chlorine bleached paper.

Composting also is part of McDonald's waste reduction strategy. After the company's compostability

tests proved successful, a Connecticut franchise owner began testing behind-the-counter separation and collection of McDonald's food and paper wastes for composting, in conjunction with a project run by the National Audubon Society. Langer sees a growing trend in composting and a real potential for McDonald's restaurants to compost a large part of their solid waste stream.

Perhaps more important than any specific action, however, is the incorporation of a waste prevention and recycling ethic into company policy. For example, when selecting packaging, McDonald's will now consider waste reduction in addition to availability, functionality, and cost. McDonald's also will

incorporate waste reduction and management goals into annual supplier business reviews and evaluate progress toward these goals.

A 160-page final report on the Waste Reduction Task Force's efforts is available for \$10.00 (for printing and shipping costs). To order a copy, call EDF at (202) 387-3500. For additional information, write to Director of Environmental Affairs, McDonald's Corporation, 1 Kroc Drive, Oakbrook, IL 60521. ☐

## Seventh Generation Takes First in Environmental Competition

Last autumn, Seventh Generation was awarded the Direct Marketing Association's 1991 Robert Rodale Environmental Achievement Award for its efforts to run an environmentally sound business, in both its internal and external operations. Seventh Generation is a direct marketing firm headquartered in Colchester, Vermont. The 1991 award was the first ever conferred by the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), a trade organization representing more than 3,600 member companies in the direct marketing field.

A panel of judges screened the competition entries, evaluating the participants on the basis of several criteria, including the companies' success in reducing the amount of waste requiring disposal in landfills and combustors and making more marketing mail recyclable.

According to Chet Dalzell, Director of Public Relations/Communications at DMA, Seventh Generation's efforts to reduce or eliminate packaging, its use of DMA's Mail Preference Service (a

centralized list of individuals who do and do not wish to receive marketing mail), its surveying of customers as to how many catalogs they want to receive per year, and the educational material enclosed in every shipment to customers are just four practices that exemplify the company's dedication to running an environmentally sound business.

For further information, contact Chet Dalzell at the Direct Marketing Association at (212) 768-7277. ☐

## MINNESOTA OFFICE OF WASTE MANAGEMENT



## Waste Prevention Successes in Minnesota

Minnesota is encouraging governments and businesses to prevent waste in a comprehensive pilot program in Itasca County. Minnesota's Office of Waste Management measures the amount of waste avoided and the money saved through the program, which began at the county courthouse and garages and was later expanded to include a newspaper publisher, hospital, and hotel convention center. Some of the key activities being implemented at the county courthouse and garages and the newspaper publisher are described below. For more information, contact Ken Brown of Minnesota's Office of Waste Management at (612) 649-5743.

### Itasca County Prevents Waste and Saves Money

As part of the pilot program, employees at the Itasca County Road and Bridge Department garages were asked to find ways to prevent waste.

The employees realized that furnace and air filters were a major component of the garages' solid waste stream. They did some research and discovered that filters were available that could be washed and reused, rather than thrown away. The switch to reusable filters saves the county over \$4,700 per year and has reduced its waste by 1,040 pounds per year. In addition, the county's courthouse has changed to reusable filter backing

and frames, so that only the filter itself is disposed of. This has resulted in a 46 percent savings in courthouse filter costs, and has reduced the courthouse's waste by 1,600 pounds per year.

In addition to the change in the type of furnace and air filters, the county implemented waste prevention measures in other areas, such as reducing unsolicited mailing advertisements and duplicate mail in two courthouse offices and encouraging employees to photocopy on both sides of a page. So far, the county has reduced its waste by 3,782 pounds per year.

### Newspaper's Program Saves Over \$18,000 Per Year

The Herald Review, a small newspaper in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, implemented waste prevention and recycling strategies that reduced the company's contracted hauling volume by 97 percent. As a result of the waste prevention measures alone, the Herald Review is eliminating 29,400 pounds of waste each year. On top of that, the Herald Review's total waste management program is saving the company over \$18,000 per year.

Department heads worked with employees to assess current waste prevention practices and to identify innovative methods to avoid waste generation throughout the entire company—from reporters and photographers on the beat to company offices and printing operations. Reporters switched from wide-ruled reporters' notebooks to narrow-ruled ones, reducing the newspaper's purchase of notebooks by 50 percent. Photographers now save film by planning the number of exposures they need in advance and using only that amount of film. They also store their film in reusable canisters.

In the office, new life was found for excess mailing labels as file labels. In addition, toner cartridges for computer printers and photocopying machines are rebuilt and reused, and employees write on the back side of used paper.

In the printing process, overruns were decreased, saving paper, ink, and time. Used aluminum printing plates are now either sold for use as construction sheeting or are recycled.

The Herald Review even found a ceramics packaging firm to purchase the paper left over from the printing process. This "waste exchange" benefits both companies—the newspaper company gets paid for what it considers a waste product, and



Paper left over from the printing process at the Herald Review is sold to another company for use in packaging.

the ceramics packaging firm gets an inexpensive packing material. The company also implemented methods to reuse waste ink, film-developing chemicals, and paste-up sheets (used in newspaper layout).

# Waste Prevention

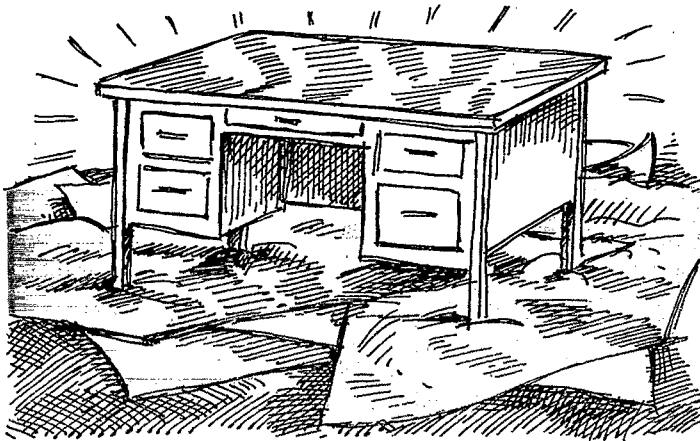
## Waste Prevention Pays Off Furniture Company Saves Over \$1 Million

Herman Miller, Inc. has reaped tremendous savings through waste prevention—\$1.4 million annually! Herman Miller, located in Zeeland, Michigan, manufactures office and institutional furniture. The company's waste prevention efforts are part of a larger corporate culture that encourages environmental protection, while recognizing the need to run a cost-efficient business.

An important first step in any waste prevention program is a waste audit to determine the types and quantities of trash being generated, identify opportunities for waste prevention, and establish a baseline for measuring results. Herman Miller hired consultants to conduct its waste audit and target specific materials and processes. The waste audit armed employees with the knowledge they needed to make the program work. Herman Miller continues to reevaluate its program and identify more ways to reduce its waste stream.

A large part of the company's program involves utilizing reusable packaging. For example, Herman Miller used to receive molded plastic chair seats in single-use cartons. Employees would dispose of the packaging, assemble the complete chairs, and utilize new packaging to ship out the final product to distributors. Herman Miller worked with the chair seat molder to devise new containers that can be reused 80 to 100 times. The new

containers consist of a cardboard sleeve with a plastic top and bottom (made from recycled detergent and milk containers). Employees can easily stack the individual pieces of the containers and take them back to the manufacturer when they go to pick up more chair seats.



Another approach the company is using is cartonless packaging. In lieu of boxing furniture, staff place cardboard edges on just the corners of the furniture and wrap the whole product in plastic film. The cardboard edges and plastic film are recycled. The company reports that for one type of office partition, this approach saved

\$250,000 in one year. The company also ships some furniture wrapped in reusable blankets.

In addition to Herman Miller's internal efforts, the company cosponsors an annual waste exchange resource fair that encourages the sharing of information and materials. At the fair, businesses post lists or set up booths to show what they have to trade, sell, or give away. Workshops are also held to educate attendees about waste prevention. The first fair in 1991 brought together over 300 people and was so successful that attendance tripled in 1992.

For more information, call Bob Johnston of Herman Miller at (616) 772-3267. ☐

## Programs Share Suggestions for Success

- Establish a waste prevention team with an enthusiastic coordinator.
- Involve employees from the beginning.
- Set measurable and obtainable goals.
- Conduct a waste audit. This can help determine the types and amounts of trash in the waste stream, identify opportunities for waste prevention, and establish a baseline for measuring results.
- Gain active upper management commitment and support.
- Implement simple ideas first to gain support for the program.
- Educate employees and get them involved in generating and implementing waste prevention ideas.
- Use the team approach to divide work and maintain motivation.
- Reward employees periodically for their waste prevention ideas and efforts.
- Monitor progress periodically and revise goals if needed. ☐





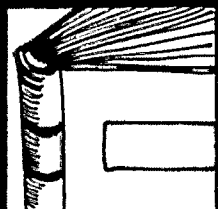
## Hot Off the Hotline

**Question:** My community is considering instituting a variable rate pricing program for municipal solid waste. What do these programs involve?

**Answer:** In variable rate, or unit pricing, programs, households "pay as they throw," that is, their waste disposal charges rise and fall proportionally to the amount of trash they generate (calculated using either weight or volume). Households that discard less waste pay lower fees.

Case studies seem to indicate that such programs provide an incentive for consumers to reduce discards through waste prevention and recycling. In Seattle, Washington, for example, households have reduced the average number of trash cans filled per week from three-and-one-half to just over one can, and the city's recycling program has flourished. Potential concerns with variable rate pricing programs are that they may result in an increase in illegal disposal, at least initially, and for volume-based programs, that some people may just compact their waste rather than actually reduce it.

EPA supports variable rate pricing and encourages communities to explore its value for their particular circumstances.



## Resources

The following publications are available at no charge from the EPA RCRA/Superfund Hotline. Call (800) 424-9346, or TDD (800) 553-7672 for the hearing impaired, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. EST.

*Environmental Fact Sheet: Yard Waste Composting* (EPA/530-SW-91-009). This fact sheet defines composting, explains the composting process, and describes how compost can be used.

*Unit Pricing: Providing an Incentive to Reduce Waste* (EPA/530-SW-91-005). Provides an introduction to unit pricing and identifies some of the issues that solid waste managers must consider in implementing variable rate collection programs in their communities.

*Variable Rates in Solid Waste: Handbook for Solid Waste Officials—Volume 1—Executive Summary* (EPA/530-SW-90-084A). Explores the feasibility, design, and operational considerations of different types of unit pricing programs.

The following publications are available from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). Call (800) 553-6847, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

*States' Efforts to Promote Lead-Acid Battery Recycling* (PB92-119 965). An EPA study on states' experience in recycling lead-acid batteries that is designed to help state officials learn from the successes of their colleagues. The study describes the car battery recycling chain and characterizes state battery recycling programs (\$19.00).

*Charging Households for Waste Collection and Disposal: The Effects of Weight- or Volume-Based Pricing on Solid Waste Management* (PB91-111 484). Describes how unit pricing works, and explains the effects of such a system on households and communities (\$19.00).

*Variable Rates in Solid Waste: Handbook for Solid Waste Officials—Volume II* (PB90-272 063). Describes the steps needed to determine the feasibility of a variable rate program and to design and implement a system tailored to a community's specific needs (\$43.00).

## Federal Agencies Plan First "Buy Recycled" Trade Fair

Five federal agencies are currently organizing the first "Government Buy Recycled Products Trade Fair and Showcase." The trade show, slated for June 29 and 30 in Washington, DC, will bring together manufacturers of goods with recycled content with the nation's biggest buyer of these products—the federal government. The sponsors of the event—the U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, General Services Administration, Council on Environmental Quality, and Office of Management and Budget—expect more than 100 exhibitors to attend the fair.

For more information, contact Nancy Stehle, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy at (703) 602-2692. ☐

## EPA Report Details Battery Recycling Efforts

Seventy-nine percent of the 1.3 million metric tons of lead consumed in the United States annually is found in automotive (lead-acid) batteries. Many states already have implemented laws to promote the recycling of used lead-acid batteries, and EPA recently completed a study of states' experience in this area. EPA conducted its study, entitled *States' Efforts to Promote Lead-Acid Battery Recycling*, to help state officials (and others involved with recycling programs) learn from the experiences of their colleagues across the country. The study describes the car battery recycling chain and characterizes state battery recycling programs. Copies of the study are now available through the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) at (800) 553-6847. ☐

# Permanent HHW Collection Programs Increase by Over 70 Percent

The latest statistics on household hazardous waste (HHW) collection programs were presented at EPA's 6th Annual Household Hazardous Waste Management Conference in Seattle, Washington.

The number of permanent HHW collection programs has increased by more than 70 percent from 1990 to 1991 according to Dana Duxbury, one of the conference organizers. Duxbury also noted that the large increase in permanent collection programs was reflected in a corresponding increased interest in exploring ways to reuse and recycle the materials that are being collected. Permanent programs give organizers added time to research markets and establish pathways for reuse and recycling.

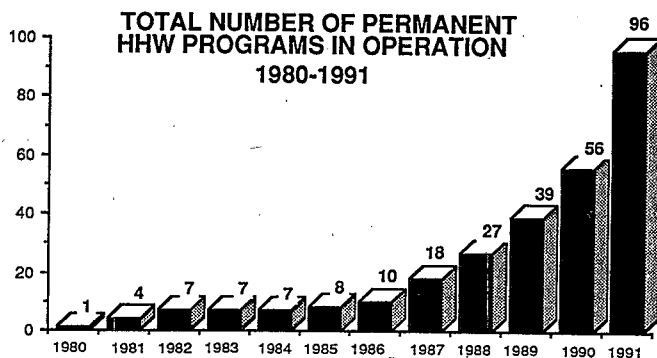
The conference, held in December 1991, was the largest to date, drawing 480 attendees from eight countries. The conference's purpose was to educate attendees about HHW and to foster communication on complex HHW management issues. Two plenary sessions and 35 workshops were con-

ducted by 128 speakers. Workshop topics included "how-to" sessions, as well as information on education programs; toxicity reduction; household batteries; paint; fluorescent lights; automotive products; household cleaners; and permanent collection programs, including door-to-door collections. In addition, presenters from Denmark, Austria, Australia, and Canada explained how HHW is managed in their respective countries.

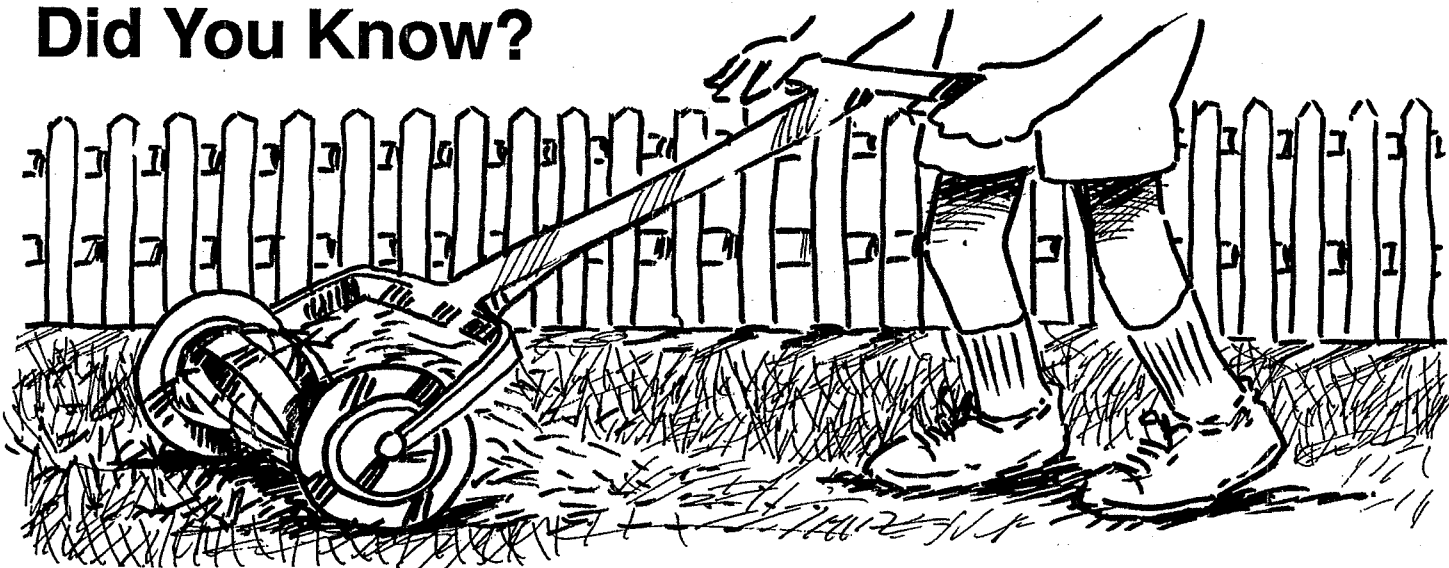
This year's conference is scheduled to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on December 9 to 12. For more information, call Tracy Bone of EPA at (202) 260-5649.



Attendees at EPA's Household Hazardous Waste Management Conference took tours of Seattle collection facilities such as this one.



## Did You Know?



Letting your grass clippings remain on your lawn rather than bagging them for disposal provides the lawn with healthy nutrients, especially organic nitrogen. Yard waste disposed of in landfills wastes space and may produce methane (an explosive gas) when it decomposes. Yard waste is also generally

unsuitable for combustion due to its high moisture content. Moreover, burning yard waste emits nitrogen oxide, one of the primary precursors of acid rain. Make sure to cut the lawn frequently to keep the grass clippings short; otherwise, they will not decompose well.

# Conference Looks at Procurement of Recycled Goods

**A**lthough many businesses, governments, and private citizens have responded with great enthusiasm to the call to recycle, the demand for goods made from recycled materials has not always kept pace with the supply of recyclables. This lack of demand has led to falling prices for many recyclables in parts of the country. The twin cities of Champaign and Urbana, Illinois, were two municipalities that found their recycling programs endangered by low prices for recyclables. So, last year Mayor Dannell McCullom of Champaign, Illinois, decided to take action to help remedy the situation.

After attending a conference on procurement of recycled goods, McCullom approached EPA Region 5 (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) and asked Agency officials to join him in organizing a similar conference for the Midwest. Months of planning culminated in the Midwest Recycled Products Procurement Conference and Expo, held in Champaign-Urbana on April 30 and May 1, 1992.

EPA Region 5 teamed up with the Illinois Department of Energy and Natural Resources and five other supporting organizations to sponsor the event. Originally, the conference was intended only for universities and colleges in the Region. McCullom said that he realized that universities were huge purchasers of a diversity of goods—from paper to oil—but that they could play a greater role in purchasing recycled products. The list of invitees

was soon widened, however, to include counties and municipalities, once organizers understood that they, too, could benefit greatly from such a conference.



Over 400 people attended the conference and toured the product exposition, which took place at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana Assembly Hall. Conference participants also took part in technical sessions under three tracks:

- Government's Role in Procurement
- Effective Procurement Policies
- Recycled Products: What's Available

The sessions focused on such topics as procurement policies for local government and the various types of

recycled products available. Sessions also discussed how to write procurement policies into standards and specifications, as well as overcoming barriers in buying recycled products.

The discussions were conducted primarily by representatives of institutions that had already developed successful procurement policies. "We wanted people to walk away with blueprints of procurement plans they could set up tomorrow," said Andy Tschampa of EPA Region 5.

Over 50 manufacturers of recycled products exhibited their wares at the exposition, allowing attendees to view new technology and start gathering ideas and contacts for the implementation of their own procurement policies. In addition to the floor show, "poster sessions" filled the Assembly Hall: the galleries of the arena were opened to individuals who applied to display, lecture, or publicize the accomplishments of their organizations.

McCullom and Tschampa both expressed hope that the conference will help to boost markets for recyclables and recycled goods and make recycling a feasible and attractive waste management alternative for more communities.

For more information, contact Paul Ruesch at EPA Region 5 at (312) 886-7598. 🗑️

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