



Highlights of the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments of 1984

The New RCRA Requirements

On November 8, 1984, amendments were enacted strengthening the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the federal law protecting human health and the environment from the improper management of hazardous waste. This new legislation—the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments of 1984—makes many changes in the national program that regulates hazardous waste from the time it is generated to its final disposition. The program is administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through its Office of Solid Waste.

The new legislation makes major changes in the program to:

- Control leaking underground storage tanks. There may be as many as 10 million tanks used to store fuel, toxic chemicals, and waste in the United States. Leaking tanks are a growing source of ground-water contamination.
- Control hazardous waste generated in quantities between 100 and 1000 kilograms per month. The inclusion of these small quantity generators will increase the number of federally regulated generators from about 15,000 to over 150,000.
- Phase out the land disposal of hazardous waste. In the future, waste generators will have to reduce the amounts of hazardous waste generated, recycle their waste, and use other treatment technologies to the maximum extent possible.
- Give EPA authority to develop new criteria for facilities receiving nonhazardous solid waste (municipal landfills) to ensure that these facilities adequately protect human health and the environment from ground-water contamination.

The following is a list of the new law's significant provisions:

- Immediate prohibition against certain land disposal practices, (for example, placement of liquids in landfills, salt bed formations, mines, and caves; use of hazardous waste as a dust suppressant; and certain types of injection of hazardous waste).
- Minimum technology requirements for hazardous waste landfills, surface impoundments, and incinerators (for example, installation of double liners, systems for collecting leachate, and ground-water monitoring).

- Requirements for retrofitting certain existing surface impoundments with liners.
- Expanded requirements for monitoring and cleanup of ground water at facilities holding permits under RCRA.
- Authority to clean up past releases of hazardous wastes at RCRA-permitted facilities.
- Authority to expedite permits for new and innovative treatment technologies to foster research and development.
- Authority to impose permit conditions beyond the scope of the existing RCRA regulations to protect human health and the environment.
- Requirements to identify additional hazardous wastes.
- A full assessment of the hazards posed by a waste prior to delisting.
- Enhanced federal enforcement authorities (including the ability to issue "corrective action orders" to facilities with Interim Status under RCRA).
- Requirements for thorough inspections of federal and state hazardous waste facilities.
- Specific controls on the burning and blending of hazardous wastes as fuels.
- Requirements for the regulation of used oil.
- Tighter controls on the export of hazardous waste.
- A new program for identifying the health risks presented by individual surface impoundments and landfills.
- New citizen rights under RCRA including participation in the permitting process, legal settlements, and involvement in legal actions where past and present hazardous waste management practices pose an "imminent and substantial hazard."

While some of the provisions of the new law took effect immediately, others depend upon the timetable included in the law and EPA's promulgation of regulations. In any case, the new RCRA amendments will bring about major changes in the future management of hazardous waste in the United States.

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