

**SOLID WASTE SOURCE REDUCTION**  
**ATTACKING THE SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL PROBLEM AT THE SOURCE**

by

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### ABSTRACT

There is a continuing trend of increasing generation of wastes which are too much and too difficult to dispose of. As a result, we are no longer able to handle the waste we generate in a safe or affordable way. The focus of solid waste management until now has been on handling waste *after* it has been created.

Rather than rely purely on technologies which handle waste once it has been generated, a major focus should be on reducing the amount of waste generated and on controlling the use of problematic materials destined to become part of the waste stream. Barriers to source reduction efforts have been and continue to be: information gaps on the composition of and impact of items in the solid waste stream, confusion of the terms source reduction and waste reduction, and political and administrative problems.

Source reduction is a front-end approach to solving the solid waste generation and disposal problem, with the overall goal of minimizing the volume of material discharged as waste and minimizing the potential of waste to cause problems at or after disposal. Source reduction measures can be grouped into either an Education or Legislation category.

States should develop source reduction programs which call for adoption of a source reduction plan. The plan should clearly define program elements, short and long term goals, and program administration/agency responsibilities. A source reduction program should be designed with an education component and a legislation component.

The education component of a source reduction program should begin with:

- public outreach and consumer education,
- development of grants and technical assistance, and

- research on how to target designers and producers, manufacturers and marketing people.

In the long term, public outreach, consumer education and grants and technical assistance should continue, and actual education of designers and producers, manufacturers and marketing people should begin.

The legislation component should begin with:

- adoption of policy declarations,
- development of incentive programs,
- revision of procurement specifications, and
- formation of a committee to further analyze possible disincentive regulation (taxes, bans, deposits, and product labeling requirements), and to present findings and conclusions by an established deadline.

In the long term, incentive programs should continue and recommendations made with respect to disincentive regulation should be pursued.