



Focus on The Industrial Waste Generator Survey for the Beyond Waste project

HAZARDOUS WASTE AND TOXICS REDUCTION PROGRAM

Beyond Waste Vision

We can transition to a society where waste is viewed as inefficient and where most wastes and toxic substances have been eliminated. This will contribute to environmental, economic and social vitality.

Background

The goal of the Beyond Waste project is to develop long-range statewide plans for reducing and managing hazardous and solid wastes in Washington. Ecology is leading the effort to develop these plans with input from interested parties and the public.

To get some input on how to improve state hazardous waste and hazardous substances programs, Ecology sent an e-mail survey to about 1,000 hazardous waste generators in Washington. Here are the results.

The demographics of the response

The response rate was about 25 percent, which is considered an excellent rate. Of the 230 responders, at least 167 were private sector firms. The rest were public sector or non-profit groups. The responders included at least 50 large quantity generators, 44 medium quantity generators, and 158 small quantity generators or conditionally-exempt small quantity generators. The vast majority operated only one facility in Washington. The number of employees ranged from 1 to 500, with the spread being pretty consistent between categories. At least 134 (58 percent) of the responders said that they spent less than \$10,000 on direct waste management expenses.

Although e-mail surveys are not generally considered statistically significant, the results were interesting and useful. Ecology will use them in developing the state plans.

Preliminary assessment of the survey

Good News

- ▶ The best news is that most responders felt that it would benefit their organizations to significantly reduce the use of hazardous substances or waste generation. However, an equal number felt it is not feasible to redesign their products or processes to not use hazardous substances or generate hazardous wastes.
- ▶ Most responders already have experience in redesigning products or processes to reduce the use of hazardous substances or generation of hazardous wastes.
- ▶ Waste management costs are not an overriding concern for many businesses, regardless of size, although half of the businesses with waste costs of \$100,000 or more rated their costs as "significant" or "highly significant."

Thoughts on Waste Reduction and Recycling

- ▶ The top five “successfully reduced wastes” were: used oil, solvent, paint related products, antifreeze and batteries, and the five most “difficult to reduce wastes” were: solvent, paint related products, mercury, used oil and batteries. (At first glance, it appears odd that many items showed up on both lists. There are probably a variety of reasons for this. Some companies have a hard time recycling certain materials, while others have found a good way to do it. It is possible for something to be difficult and still be successful. Used oil and other similar products are easy to recycle as long as they are not contaminated, but if contaminated they are very difficult to recycle. Some types of batteries are easy to recycle; other types of batteries are not.)
- ▶ Most responders felt that production levels and hazardous materials use and waste generation would remain at current levels for the next three to five years.
- ▶ Responders thought the primary barrier to significantly reducing hazardous materials use and waste generation is that there are no effective less-toxic alternatives. Roughly two-thirds of businesses that spend over \$250,000 in waste costs cited government regulation as a key barrier.
- ▶ The top five factors motivating responders to reduce hazardous materials use and waste generation are that it:
 - saves money,
 - serves public interest and it's the right thing to do,
 - increases worker safety,
 - simplifies compliance with government regulations, and
 - reduces liability.

Gaining a competitive advantage was not stated as a strong motivator

Ecology Programs

- ▶ Ecology programs and regulations appear to have had an impact on responders' waste management activities and encourage waste reduction.
- ▶ Twenty-one responders wrote in the ‘annual Dangerous Waste Workshops’ as “most helpful in managing and reducing hazardous wastes.”
- ▶ Responders have many suggestions for improving Ecology's programs and regulations, but no single theme jumps out as the thing to do. At least 10 people wrote in the response that Ecology's regulations should be more “user-friendly.”

Potential Incentives

- ▶ Ecology asked businesses which potential incentives they thought would be most effective in helping them reduce their use of hazardous substances. The scale used was:

<u>Highly effective</u>	<u>Somewhat effective</u>	<u>Neutral/unsure</u>	<u>Somewhat ineffective</u>	<u>Highly ineffective</u>
1	2	3	4	5

The incentives perceived to have the highest potential by those responding were:

- A regulatory framework that reduces regulatory burdens for hazardous waste generators that voluntarily practice "beyond compliance" behaviors and/or achieve environmental outcomes that exceed mandatory standards (scored 3.77)
- Education programs targeted at consumers and other businesses to encourage them to buy products that contain fewer hazardous materials (scored 3.37).
- A negotiated process with industry resulting in the phase-out over time of selected highly hazardous substances (scored 3.36).
- A statewide technical assistance and recognition program, such as the Envirostars program (scored 3.32).
- Low-interest loans for organizations investing in processes and/or equipment to reduce hazardous waste generation (scored 3.25).
- Increased hazardous waste disposal fees, coupled with a rebate program for organizations that achieve a high level of waste reduction (scored 3.22).
- Assistance with the redesign of the organization's product or process to minimize or eliminate hazardous substance use and waste (scored 2.83).

To summarize the survey results, regulatory relief in exchange for environmental performance has the most support as a future effort to explore, followed by education and long-term phase-outs of key chemicals. Of the possible incentives, there appears to be least interest in low-interest loans and help with redesigning processes.

For more information on the Beyond Waste project, including other input Ecology received from hazardous waste generators, go to: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/beyondwaste>

Those lacking Internet access can contact Chris Chapman at (360) 407-7160 for a paper copy.