



FACTS ABOUT: SOLID WASTE PROGRAM

Maryland Department
of the Environment

Maryland's Solid Waste Permitting and Inspection

Improper handling of society's byproducts in the form of domestic, commercial and industrial wastes can pose direct threats to both the public health and the quality of Maryland's water resources. Since 1914, Maryland has had laws governing how solid wastes are to be handled to minimize the significant risks posed by these materials. The Solid Waste Program is responsible for two important elements of environmental regulation: the review of the scientific information needed to support application for new solid waste disposal facilities, and the inspection and enforcement of regulations at permitted and unpermitted disposal facilities. Regulated facilities include municipal sanitary landfills, rubble landfills, land clearing debris landfills, non-hazardous industrial waste landfills, natural wood waste facilities, municipal incinerators and waste-to-energy facilities, solid waste processing and composting facilities, and transfer stations.

The Program is responsible for approximately 125 permitted and 25 proposed facilities at any given time, as well as 40 to 50 enforcement actions against illegal facilities and complaint investigations amounting to a few hundred per year. The permit review activities cover a broad range of environmental and engineering elements to insure that new facilities use state-of-the-art techniques to protect the State's surface water, ground water, air, and other natural resources. The compliance staff performs inspections and investigations to find, stop and clean up illegal dumps and operational problems at permitted facilities. Typical problems which are corrected include odor problems, soil erosion, discharges of pollutants to surface water, ground-water pollution, and inadequate cover leading to the propagation of potentially disease-bearing animals such as rats, flies and mosquitoes.

On October 9, 1993, new federal regulations governing municipal sanitary landfills went into effect nation-wide. These rules have had a significant impact on the regulated community in Maryland, and they are effective regardless of State requirements. As nearly all of the affected facilities in Maryland are county-owned landfills, the burden on the local jurisdictions increased significantly. The Program is working to integrate these federal requirements for municipal landfills into the State solid waste regulations. The Program received partial approval for Maryland's solid waste management program from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Although no federal funds are available to support this program, these actions help the local governments and other elements of the regulated community by insuring that only one set of rules are applicable to their facilities. With partial approval, the State is able to retain a substantial degree of latitude to interpret and apply the federal requirements, which would be lacking in the strict interpretation of the federal requirements.

On August 29, 1997, the Department amended the solid waste regulations to require the installation of liners and leachate collection systems at rubble landfills. Even though most of the building materials contained in construction and demolition debris are inert, some components of the waste stream may contain or produce, through decay, substances which degrade water quality. This requirement aids in protecting our water resources from pollution in the event that unacceptable waste materials are present in the waste stream delivered to this type of facility, and escape detection before burial.

For more information, contact MDE's Solid Waste Program at 410-537-3315.



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