

Solid Waste Market

The solid waste market approximately \$25 billion in 1990. In 1989 there were 445 million pounds disposed of in landfills, 1.2 billion pounds injected into underground wells and 916 million pounds transferred to Treatment/Storage/Disposal (TSDs) facilities. There are less than 6000 commercial landfills in the U.S., down from 18,500 in 1976.

There are 100 existing incinerator plants in the U.S. An additional 30 new plants with a total of 70 units are expected to be built within the next five years. All of these incinerators have the capacity to burn 250 tons per day of solid waste, which is 85% of current capacity. Currently, 14% of all municipal solid waste is incinerated, 13% is recycled and 73% is landfilled. In 1988, nearly 180 million tons of municipal solid waste was produced or about 4 pounds per person per day. It is expected that these figures will increase by 10% by the year 2000.

U.S. consumption of degradable plastic products in 1990 was over 100 million pounds and valued at over \$200 million. U.S. consumption of primary raw materials for degradable plastics, including inherently degradable resins and degradants totaled over 50 million pounds in 1990 and was valued at over \$30 million. A double digit growth rate is predicted through the year 2000 for degradable plastic resins, degradant additives and degradable plastic products.

By 1995, residential sources will contribute over 72 %, or 145 million tons, to the solid waste stream, solid wastes from commercial establishments will reach 47 million tons, and sanitary landfilling will drop from to 106 million tons. Packaging accounts for one-third of the products found in municipal solid waste streams and will account for an increase by two % annually to 65 million tons in 1995. Newspapers and disposable diapers will account for 58 million tons and durable goods will increase 1.4 % per year to 27 million tons in 1995.

A ton of paper made from recycled wastepaper, rather than virgin fiber, saves 17 trees, 7,000 gallons of water, and enough energy (4,100 kilowatt hours) to run an average home for six months. It also reduces the use of toxic chemicals required for pulping and bleaching paper, eliminating 60 pounds of air pollutants, and saves three cubic yards of landfill space.

8. Rank-Ordering Priorities: Indoor air pollution, pesticides and drinking water are the greatest risks to human health. EPA's New England region cited ambient ozone pollution as the greatest health problem, followed by radon and lead. Indoor air, radon and pesticides receive relatively little attention by EPA.
9. Potential Environmental Backlash: While the Clean Air Amendments were being passed at the federal level, a number of environmental initiatives were defeated in state elections in 1990. It also appears that some environmental dangers have been overstated: asbestos exposure in buildings does not pose the health threat previously thought, and an asbestos backlash has occurred. The health impacts of radon and dioxins are less than previously estimated.