

Waste Exchange Encyclopedia Article

Waste Exchange

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Waste Exchange

Getting rid of industrial waste poses many problems for those who generate it. With environmental restraints enforced by fines, companies must minimize waste at its source, recycle it within the company, or transport it for off-site **recycling**, treatment, or disposal.

The concept of waste exchange, begun in Canada in the 1980s, involves moving one institution's overstock, obsolete, damaged, contaminated, or post-dated materials to another site that might be able to use it. Waste exchange companies sprang up to meet this need, but the need for effective and rapid communication between these companies soon became apparent, because much of the waste involved in the program had to be dealt with on a timely basis. Hazardous wastes, for example, must be disposed of within 90 days.

In 1991, the **Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA) gave a \$350,000 grant to the Pacific Materials Exchange in Spokane, Washington, to develop a free computer online network. Servicing about 30 waste exchange companies in the United States and Canada, the National Materials Exchange Network acts like "an industrial dating service," according to director Robert Smee. The service is easily accessible by an 800 number [800-858-6625] to anyone with a computer and a modem. Smee estimates that the computer network in its first year of operation saved companies \$27 million in disposal fees.

While protecting the identity of companies generating waste, the network publishes a want list and an available source list of laboratory **chemicals**, paints, acids, and other wastes. Some are hazardous, but others are innocuous, such as one company's scrap wood, which was bought by another to be ground up for air freshener.

See Also

Industrial Waste Treatment; Solid Waste; Waste Management

Resources

Periodicals

Manning, S. "Waste Exchanges: Why Dump When You Can Deal?" *PEM: Plant Engineering & Maintenance* (June 1990): 32–41.

Schwartz, E. I. "A Data Base That Truly Is 'Garbage In, Garbage Out.'" *Business Week* (September 17, 1990): 92.