

Waste Reduction Encyclopedia Article

Waste Reduction

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Waste Reduction

Waste reduction aims to reduce environmental **pollution** by minimizing the generation of waste. It is also often an economically viable option because it requires an efficient use of raw materials. Waste-reduction methods include modifying industrial processes to reduce the amount of waste residue, changing raw materials, or **recycling** or reusing waste sources.

It is more difficult to alter existing industrial processes than it is to incorporate waste-reduction technologies into new operations. Large-scale changes in production equipment are essential to achieving waste reduction. Proper handling of materials and **fugitive emissions** reduction, as well as plugging leaks and preventing spills, all help in waste reduction. Process equipment must be checked on a regular basis for corrosion, vibrations, and leaks. Increases in automation and the prevention of vapor losses also help reduce waste generation.

Changes in what an industry puts into a process can be used to reduce the amount of waste generated. One example is the substitution of raw materials such as water to clean a part instead of solvents. End-products can also be modified to help reduce waste. Another aspect of waste reduction is the control of fugitive emissions by placing a floating roof on open tanks, for example. Other waste-reduction options include the installation of condensers, automatic tank covers, and increasing tank heights. But these and other decisions on waste reduction very much depend on the size and structure of a company.

See Also

Industrial Waste Treatment;; Recyclables; Reuse; Toxic Use Reduction Legislation; Waste Management; Waste Stream

Resources

Books

Robinson, W. D., ed. *The Solid Waste Handbook*. New York: Wiley, 1986.

Underwood, J. D., et al. *Garbage: Practices, Problems, and Remedies*. New York: INFORM, 1988.

Other

Waste Minimization: Environmental Quality With Economic Benefits. Washington, DC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, 1987.