

REDUCING SOLID WASTE

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUE PROFILE

Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE)
Environmental Sustainability for the Salina Community

Issue: Reduce the amount of waste taken to the landfill by local industries and consumers in Salina, Kansas

Background:

The way to minimize the amount of waste entering the landfill is to reduce, reuse, and recycle (the three Rs). One way to accomplish this is by changing practices and processes to reduce or eliminate the generation of solid (non-hazardous) and hazardous wastes and materials.

The true cost of a product must be evaluated over its entire life (life cycle analysis). Developing and shipping a product requires energy. Excessive packaging uses additional raw materials and is often completely unnecessary—serving only a promotional service instead of being functional. Large amounts of energy can be saved by recycling rather than harvesting virgin raw materials. For example, recycling aluminum can cut energy consumption by 95%; plastics by 70%; steel, 60%; paper, 40%; and glass, 30%.

A product's true cost includes greenhouse gases emitted in its creation as well as its use and disposal. Greenhouse gases include pollutants that potentially cause acid rain, smog, and contaminated waterways. Reducing, reusing, and recycling conserve natural resources and reduce the amount of waste that must be burned or buried. It reduces pollution and the demand for energy. The three Rs help with prolonging the life of landfills. Waste minimization creates safer working conditions for employees, protects human health and the environment, and saves money through avoided disposal costs.

Standards:

There are no local laws mandating business or public solid-waste minimization. However, 19 states currently have laws for recycling electronics waste, and several states promote (not a law) waste reduction, recycling, and responsible management of solid wastes.

Laws exist for the management of hazardous waste by business.

Community-specific indicators:

What does the data say?

From the data available, it is reported that Salina recycles, on average, 10 percent of its waste when 30 percent is the national average. Within the landfill statistics, taken from 2004, the major waste streams to the landfill are food waste, plastic, paper, corrugated and Kraft paper, and wood. Curbside recycling is limited to 900 residents.

Who is affected?

Anyone who generates waste is affected by this issue. Also, the entire community is affected due to the cost waste minimization could eventually save us in taxes to maintain the landfill and prolong the time before the landfill will need replacing or expanding; these incentives may attract new industries to Salina.

How is the community affected?

By giving incentives to industries that recycle and are conscious of waste reduction, Salina may attract new businesses and, thus, generate more jobs. If we begin to reduce the waste taken to our landfill, we can reduce costs associated with constructing a new landfill site as well as reduce pollutants that come from the waste.

Since 1995, the Solid Waste Management Committee for Salina has been working on a plan for waste reduction and diversion by establishing a \$1.00-per-ton tipping fee at the Salina Landfill in order to generate funds to be used for public education, recycling program support, waste-reduction efforts, and diversion of waste from disposal at the Salina Landfill to eventually slow the amount of materials being placed in the landfill so the need for constructing a new site, and costs associated with it, can be set back to a later time.

What are the environmental conditions?

The need for a new landfill in Salina has not gotten to an alarming point, but a proactive stance would prevent it from becoming a future complication.

What are the contributing factors and behaviors of the community?

The amount of industrial businesses, along with the potential expansion into Salina's industrial area, warrants a need for there to be an ongoing awareness and means of conveyance for recycling and waste reduction

How does the community protect itself?

As of now, the Project H.U.N.T and the curb-side recycling program appear to be the only viable means of addressing recycling and waste reduction on a city-wide scale.

Data sources:

Where did the data come from?

Salina Area Chamber of Commerce: www.salinakansas.org

City of Salina Website: www.salina-ks.gov

Kansas Wesley University: www.kwu.edu/publicrelations

National Geographic, January 2008

The data comes from project reviews and updates within the city of Salina and some from Kansas Wesleyan University (KWU) itself just as an overview of the projects they are involved with; unfortunately, much of the data comes simply from project overviews and outlined goals rather than quantitative statistics that represent actual amounts of recyclable or waste goods that have been diverted from our landfill or taken from the environment.

Age of data?

Much of the data is one to 10 years old.

Additional data needed?

Data pertaining to actual amounts of wasted products generated by industries within Salina, as well as data specifying waste that has been diverted due to measures and projects that have already been in place, is not readily available or does not exist.

Paper prepared by Eddie DeHerrera and Barb Johnson, January 2010.