

Comments on

**Municipal Solid Waste-
Pre-treatment & Residuals Management**

**An EPA Technical Guidance Document
- CONSULTATION DRAFT-**

From

Midlands Regional Waste Management Steering Group

13th October 2008.

What is Pre-Treatment? (P12 of Document)

The definition or interpretation of pre-treatment is crucial as far as Local Authorities in the Midlands Region are concerned. A 2 Bin system already operates in all of the five Counties in the Midlands Region (North Tipperary, Laois, Offaly Westmeath and Longford). We are already in the process of drawing up Bye Laws for the Storage, Presentation and Segregation for the Purpose of and in the course of the Collection of Household Waste which we hope will be adopted by the respective Elected Members by February of 2009 following public Consultation and final adoption by the Elected Members. These bye laws will require the introduction of the 3rd or 'Brown' Bin for the collection of organic waste by September of 2009 thus removing it from the normal residual waste stream being landfilled. This process accords with the DOEHLG Circular WPPR 17/08 entitled 'National Strategy on Biodegradable Waste' dated 31/07/08. In tandem with this the Region is writing to all of the permitted Collectors requiring them to introduce the 3rd Bin by September of 2009. This process is also advancing in the other regions. Does this accord with the EPA requirements?

Minimum Pre-Treatment Obligations (Page 14)

Compliance with Article 6 of the landfill Directive for the LA landfills is of major concern here. How does a landfill operator (LA's in this case) demonstrate that 'other waste accepted at the landfill has been subjected to appropriate pre-treatment'? 3 out of the 5 LA's in the Midlands Region (Laois, Offaly and N. Tipp.) have no control over the waste stream entering their landfill i.e. the collection service has been privatised. In these cases it is difficult to control what happens as regards pre-treatment except through the Bye Laws. Much of the waste stream will require to be diverted before it reaches the landfill in the 1st instance in order to comply with the diversion targets. The Annual Environmental Reports are the only practical means that Local Authority Operated Landfills have to demonstrate a level of compliance.

However all of the LA landfills accept domestic customers at both their recycling and disposal facilities. We have major concerns over how we ensure that these customers comply with the Article 6 Pre Treatment Obligations. Certainly 20% of the domestic/household waste landfilled in the Midlands Region is delivered for disposal directly by the customers who chose not to avail of a collection service in their area. We consider it part of

our Public Service Obligation to facilitate local residents who chose to dispose of their waste in this manner.

Each Local Authority promotes home composting at every opportunity through the very valuable work of the Environmental Awareness Officers. It would seem that the best and perhaps only way of achieving compliance is through the amended collection permits backed up by the bye laws.

However, the dilemma still remains for LA Landfill Operators in relation to pre-treatment for the domestic customer who opts out of a collection service in favour of using the local LA Landfill directly.

The issue of home composting is very important and should form part of the compliance regime. It would be helpful if financial assistance by way of a grant was available to the homeowner in order to encourage this process of pre-treatment – especially those people who use the LA landfills directly.

Urban Areas as mentioned in Page 15 of the document needs further clarification. Does this mean the large towns above a certain population as detailed in the DOEHLG Circular mentioned earlier (1500 people and above)?

Local Authority Landfills are already under major financial pressures trying to survive in the business. Declining gate fees, Increased Operating and Capital costs for cell construction and remediation works have put LA landfills under major financial pressures. They also have to compete with each other and with privately owned landfills who operate under different rules. Local Authorities in the Midlands Region do not have the financial capability to install Biological or other Treatment Facilities at their landfills in order to ensure compliance with the pre-treatment obligations. We have always understood that the Private Sector, who have control over the majority of the waste stream, would build the necessary Treatment Infrastructure. Pre-treatment facilities for existing landfills will be expensive and require planning permission. To-date the private sector has not met this challenge.

In relation to incineration the merits of the 2 Bin system will be diminished as only very marketable materials will be collected in the blue bin. Is incineration classed as recovery and not disposal in order to meet the pre treatment obligations.?

Validation of Treatment Effort.

What is the 'site/region specific assessment 'regarding the *appropriate* level of pre-treatment?.

In relation to the Annual Environmental Report, the level of detail required on waste acceptance and audit policy in order to satisfy the EPA that only pre-treated waste has been accepted at the facility needs to be clarified.

General.

The future of gas utilisation for LA Landfills needs to be reassessed also in light of the expected decrease in gas generation arising from the removal of most of the organic and biodegradable waste from landfills over the next 5 to 10 years. The financial payback indicated on most of the studies to date was in the order of 10 years.