

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 26 of the Waste Management Act 1996 requires that the Environmental Protection Agency prepare a National Hazardous Waste Management Plan. Work on this project began in 1997 with the appointment of consultants to conduct a Strategy Study to assist the Agency in its preparation of the Plan. A Proposed Plan was published in September 1999 for public consultation. During the consultation period, the Agency held public events at six venues around the country and received a significant amount of feedback on the Proposed Plan, both verbal and written. The National Hazardous Waste Management Plan is published as a statutory document in accordance with the Waste Management Act.

Data and statistics

The table below summarises hazardous waste data for 1996 and 1998.

Prevention of hazardous waste

In accordance with the waste hierarchy and with Irish and EU policy, the preferred option for the

management of hazardous waste is its prevention and minimisation. To this end, “prevention” forms the cornerstone of the Plan. An ambitious Prevention Programme for hazardous waste is put forward in the Plan with an estimated cost of £43.5 million. Experience in Ireland and elsewhere tells us that prevention works. That experience was drawn upon to develop an integrated Prevention Programme that encompasses all of the elements required to achieve success with all sectors of society. As a first step, the Prevention Programme requires the establishment of an expert Prevention Team to develop and co-ordinate prevention initiatives in prioritised sectors. The Prevention Team will work towards achieving the following targets:

- the reduction of hazardous waste disposal to 1996 levels; and
- the elimination of unreported hazardous waste.

The Prevention Programme includes provisions for significant assistance, both financial and technical, in achieving hazardous waste prevention. A

Summary of hazardous waste statistics, 1996 to 1998

	<i>tonnes 1996</i>	<i>tonnes 1998</i>	<i>Trend 1996 to 1998</i>
Recovered or disposed of on-site	141,156	131,738	7% decrease
Recovered or disposed of off-site	36,434 (including landfill of 2,964 tonnes)	42,485 (including landfill of 3,430 tonnes)	17% increase
Exported	51,727	99,598*	92% increase
Other or unspecified category	317	22,196**	–
Total reported hazardous waste	229,634	296,017	29% increase
Total disposal	86,754	120,354	39% increase
Total recovery	138,969	152,583*	10% increase
Total unreported hazardous waste	98,228	74,311	24% decrease
* including 23,691 tonnes of contaminated soil exported for recovery			
** including 21,795 tonnes of contaminated soil			

mechanism for funding the Prevention Programme and Prevention Team needs to be put in place. Potentially unpopular decisions are required if the Programme is to be self-financing in line with the polluter pays principle.

Collection of hazardous waste

Ireland has a relatively well developed network of hazardous waste contractors, brokers and transfer stations. However, this network is generally availed of only by larger generators and there is a large sector, mainly represented by generators of small-scale or unreported hazardous waste, which does not, for different reasons, avail of the services offered by these companies. An improved collection service is essential if we are to achieve the target of eliminating unreported hazardous waste. Such a collection service must be made available to generators of small quantities of hazardous waste in the industrial, commercial and agricultural sectors as well as to households. Improved enforcement of existing legislation by regulatory authorities and the provision of information to generators is essential to ensure that all hazardous waste is properly segregated and separately collected.

Recovery and disposal of hazardous waste

There are currently seventeen facilities in Ireland authorised to store, recover and dispose of a diverse range of hazardous waste. The development of some of these facilities in recent years has been aided by Government grants. Continued grant assistance and funding are important if we are to ensure their continued operation, innovation, diversification and expansion. Regulation in the form of licences and permits will ensure that facilities operate to a high environmental standard. Improved collection rates for unreported waste are likely to increase the intake of hazardous waste to many of these facilities.

A significant and increasing quantity of hazardous waste is exported from Ireland for recovery and disposal, mainly in the form of solvent recovery, reuse as fuel, incineration and landfill. This Plan recommends that Ireland becomes self-sufficient in the management of our own hazardous waste. This is particularly important in terms of hazardous waste disposal, for the following reason. While there exists a legally supported right of inter-EU

movement of waste for the purpose of recovery, there is no such support or obligation on Member States to accept imports of hazardous waste for the purpose of disposal. Member States can and do restrict imports for disposal and this is a major bottleneck in terms of security of disposal outlets for hazardous waste which requires disposal but for which there is no disposal facility in Ireland. This Plan recommends that disposal capacity be provided for those hazardous wastes that are currently exported for disposal to thermal treatment and landfill facilities in other countries.

Hazardous waste disposal sites

A legacy of the past is the presence of hazardous waste materials in disposal sites around the country. This Plan sets out a methodology by which local authorities, in conjunction with their obligations under Section 22 of the Act, can identify sites at which hazardous waste disposal took place and prioritise these sites into those requiring short, medium and long term action and/or remediation.

Implementation of the Plan

It is recommended that an Implementation Committee be established to consist of senior representatives of (1) organisations with a statutory responsibility for the management of waste and (2) of commercial sectoral organisations. The Implementation Committee will ensure that progress is made in implementing the recommendations of the Plan. The functions of the Prevention Team will be overseen by the Implementation Committee.

Local authorities have a significant role in implementing the Plan, generally within the scope of local or regional Waste Management Plans. Except where a particular facility is licensed by the Agency, local authorities are responsible for hazardous waste regulation within their functional areas. It is envisaged that local authorities will take an increasing role in the promotion of hazardous waste prevention.

The Agency is required to carry out a review of the Plan at least every five years. Other functions to be carried out by the Agency include participation on the Implementation Committee, participation on the Prevention Team and provision of information on hazardous waste on an ongoing basis.

Resources and funding

Investment is required in three principal areas:

- in hazardous waste prevention and implementation of the Prevention Programme;
- by the hazardous waste recovery and disposal industry in providing new and/or upgraded or improved services; and
- by local authorities and the Agency in the enforcement of hazardous waste legislation and in planning for the provision of hazardous waste recovery and disposal facilities to householders and other small scale generators.

Priorities 2001-2006

1. The establishment of an Implementation Committee by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. This committee would be responsible for guiding the overall implementation of the Plan.
2. The establishment of a Prevention Team to implement the Prevention Programme. This 'Team' would be responsible for the development of the Programme, for the setting of priorities within the Programme itself and for their initiation.
3. The identification and elimination of unreported hazardous waste to prevent its uncontrolled disposal and resultant emissions to the environment.
4. The identification, preliminary evaluation and prioritisation of sites at which hazardous waste disposal has taken place and the implementation of remedial works at priority sites.
5. Establishment of an improved collection infrastructure for hazardous household, agricultural and SME wastes.
6. The allocation of financial and technical assistance for the development of facilities for the recovery and disposal of hazardous waste where existing capacity is unsatisfactory.
7. The development of hazardous waste landfill capacity and thermal treatment for hazardous wastes requiring disposal to achieve self sufficiency and reduce our reliance on export.

8. Improved public awareness of the impacts of hazardous wastes.
9. Build on on-going prevention, research and demonstration initiatives – for example, the *Cleaner Production Pilot Demonstration Programme*.

