

Best Practices

Recycling by the Numbers

By: Barbara Baker, communications manager, Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority

Recycling is an important component of Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority's (LCSWMA) integrated solid waste system, which also consists of the Waste-to-Energy facility, the Frey Farm Landfill and the Transfer Station Complex. Of the more than 500,000 tons of municipal solid waste generated in Lancaster County each year, 37% is separated for recycling by businesses, institutions and residents.

Remarkably, of the 187,760 tons of post-consumer material reported recycled in 2007, 75% of the tonnage was from businesses, industries and institutions, with households contributing the remaining 25%. Of the 319,640 tons of municipal solid waste processed by LCSWMA in 2007, the non-residential community's contribution was 51% while households generated 49% of the waste.

Many municipalities in Lancaster County are mandated to have recycling ordinances and programs for households and businesses by Act 101 of 1988, the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act. In a mandated municipality, the ordinance requires commercial and institutional establishments to recycle, at a minimum, post-consumer corrugated cardboard, office paper, aluminum and yard waste. Most municipal ordinances also require businesses to recycle the materials collected at residences.

The data used to calculate the recycling rate and tonnage is reported to local municipal recycling coordinators in early February each year by establishments that ship or deliver materials directly to a recycling market. [Please contact your municipal recycling coordinator if your establishment has not received a recycling report request.] This data is then forwarded by the coordinator to LCSWMA's Recycling staff for compilation and submission to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP). As indicated by the data, the recycling efforts and reports from the County business community have a significant impact on the recycling tonnage in Lancaster County.

Accurate and thorough reporting of recycling efforts by an establishment is important to employees, customers and other stakeholders that are evaluating the "greenness and sustainability" of an organization. Plus, based on the accuracy and completeness of the recycling report submitted, municipalities receive recycling grant money which can be used for infrastructure improvements and to keep the local tax rate down.

Many business managers have discovered that recycling actually avoids or reduces waste disposal costs. To assist businesses, industries and institutions with establishing or expanding recycling programs, free technical assistance is available through LCSWMA. Please contact Tom Adams, LCSWMA's Recycling Manager at tadams@lcswma.org or (717) 397-9968 for more information.

A market list is available online in the Recycling section at www.lcswma.org for information to effectively dispose or recycle materials generated by agriculture, businesses, municipal and institutional establishments.