



Waste Disposal and Management*

Activity M.h

GRADE LEVELS: 7 - 8

OBJECTIVE: To explore current methods of waste disposal and management.

VOCABULARY: landfill, combustion, composting, recycling, source reduction, Department of Sanitation, integrated waste management

PROCEDURE:

Ask the following questions:

What is meant by “throwing something away”?

Where is away?

What do we do with waste in our society? (littering, landfill, waste combustion, composting, recycling)

Elicit from students different methods of waste disposal and management and talk a little bit about each one. Help students understand that landfill involves controlled burying of waste in the ground, waste combustion means controlled burning of waste for energy recovery, composting involves converting food and yard wastes into a material capable of enriching soil, and recycling means reusing waste to make new materials.

Ask the following question:

How does our town manage its residential waste?

If students cannot answer this question, you might want to research it as a class by contacting the Department of Sanitation or town planning board or arrange to have a representative from the Department of Sanitation or a town planning official visit the classroom to discuss local waste management options. Ask students to prepare some questions in advance.

You may want to plan a field trip to a local landfill, waste combustion plant, or recycling facility so that students can see firsthand how waste is managed in your community.

Define for students the concept of integrated waste management. Tell them that most communities cannot rely exclusively on one method of waste disposal or management. For example, even if a community combusted most of its waste, the ash would need to be disposed of in a landfill and some materials would not burn. To effectively manage all of a community’s waste requires a combination of techniques. The techniques currently available are source reduction or reducing the amount and toxicity of waste generated, recycling or reusing waste materials, and waste combustion for energy recovery and landfilling. A plan that combines all of these techniques to safely and effectively handle a community’s solid waste is known as integrated waste management.

* Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Let’s Reduce and Recycle: Curriculum for Solid Waste Awareness