



Not In My Backyard: Siting A Resource Recovery Facility*

Activity M.n

GRADE LEVELS: 7 - 8

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine the complex social, economic, and environmental problem of siting a resource recovery facility to determine the advantages and disadvantages for the community.

MATERIALS:

Pen or pencil

Handouts: Instruction sheet for each group of students

Worksheet for each Town Council member

VOCABULARY:

resource recovery

BACKGROUND:

Siting any solid waste facility has become very controversial. People are afraid of negative effects to themselves and the environment. At the same time that we do not want facilities near us, we are still generating tons and tons of waste that must be disposed of. Reduction, reuse, and recycling are important strategies, but no matter how good and efficient we become, there will still be residual waste that must go somewhere. Our options include reducing, recycling, composting, landfilling, incinerating, and others. Each community will need to come up with a plan to manage its waste. This exercise can be carried out for a resource recovery facility or any other disposal option.

PROCEDURE:

1. Tell students that they are going to role-play a town meeting in which an important decision must be made. Explain that the town has a solid waste disposal problem and is considering the construction of an incinerator/resource recovery system to be part of the solution. Students will conduct a town meeting to decide whether or not the incinerator should be built.
2. Divide the class into five groups. Four of the groups will represent specific interest groups testifying at this public hearing. The fifth group will represent the Town Council whose responsibility is to hear the testimony and make a final determination on siting the resource recovery facility. Assign a role to each group and distribute the appropriate instruction sheets.
3. Explain that one representative from each group will present the group's position and concerns to the Council. Each Town Council member will be allowed to ask questions of the group following the presentation. After all of the position statements have been presented, a block of time for the groups to question each other and for general discussion will be provided. Allow time for discussion

and selection of a group spokesperson. Depending on the amount of background information your students possess, you may wish to extend the lesson to allow further work and/or library research or you may proceed with the hearing.

4. When the group members are ready to make their presentations, assemble the entire class and have the Town Council members sit facing them. The meeting is called to order by the Council Chairperson. Each group spokesperson presents a position statement. After questions and discussion, the Council votes on the proposal to site the facility.

FOLLOW-UP:

Students may want to use this exercise with another group (youth or adult) to help them better understand the complexity of the problem.

*Source: Cornell Waste Management Institute