



# Waste Wise e-News

*A Tool for Environmental Sustainability Resources and Networking*

## **[DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER FOR THE WASTE WISE ANNUAL MEETING THIS TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6TH!](#)**

### **BENEFITS OF CAPTURING ORGANIC WASTE**

Organics, including food waste, make up a significant portion of our overall waste stream. The U.S. EPA approximates food waste in the U.S. to be 30 million tons, or around 20 percent, of our solid waste stream annually. Including other organic waste such as yard waste and animal waste, these percentages become much higher.

It is a common misconception that food biodegrades in a landfill. In fact, landfills are oxygen-deprived (anaerobic) environments so all solid waste breaks down much slower than it would if exposed to oxygen (aerobic). In addition, the anaerobic environment of a landfill produces methane which has 20 times more greenhouse gas effects than the carbon dioxide produced from the presence of oxygen in an aerobic environment according to the U.S. EPA.

### **Options for Organic Waste Management**

In the case of organic waste, several management options can maximize its contributions to the environment rather than allowing it to sit in a landfill. The lack of existing local infrastructure is perhaps the biggest barrier to organic waste management. Therefore, businesses must often rely on the options available in their area if any options exist at all. However, it is important to recognize that businesses can have a significant influence on the expansion of options for organic waste by voicing their needs and working with local businesses that have similar goals and initiatives.

- **Food-to-people** - The U.S. EPA food waste hierarchy always focuses on people first. If possible, it is always important to donate edible food waste to organizations which serve people in need.
- **Food-to-animals** - A number of farmers are licensed to accept food waste to feed their livestock. Feeding animals is second on the EPA's food management hierarchy and would generally include only food items which livestock can consume. Additionally, there are two different types of licenses, exempt and garbage feeders, which can limit the range of food accepted by the farmer.
- **Composting** - Under aerobic conditions, food waste and other organic materials can be commercially composted under closely-managed conditions. The options for commercial composting are currently limited in Minnesota, and licensing for commercial compost sites has historically been quite comprehensive. However, the licensing process has been in the process of change, hopefully providing more incentive for counties and private companies to pursue this as a preferred waste management option for organics.
- **Anaerobic digestion (energy-producing)** - Management of a variety of organic wastes via anaerobic digestion can produce electricity by capturing the methane. By sequestering

the methane, this process utilizes it as a resource for electricity rather than allowing it to directly enter the atmosphere and contribute to greenhouse gases. The sludge left over from the digestion process can be managed in a variety of ways depending on its composition, including by composting.

### **Benefits to the Bottom Line**

After waste prevention, reuse and recycling are the next best ways to manage wastes. In Minnesota, recycling is not taxed, while solid waste has an associated fee of 17 percent. In addition, many counties have additional solid waste fees. Managing your organic wastes can benefit your bottom line with decreased fees, pickup and disposal costs depending on the system you utilize and services available to your business. It is also important for businesses to recognize the importance of pursuing these “non-mainstream” waste management options. The increased demand for different ways to manage waste will be the best way to create the infrastructure needed to sustain such initiatives.

### **RESOURCES**

CIWMB

[Organic Materials Management](#)

U.S. EPA

[Food Waste Recovery Hierarchy](#)

### **IN THE NEWS**

Waste & Recycling News, September 29, 2009

[“Minnesota Senator Introduces Electronic Recycling Bill”](#)

Prior Lake American, September 28, 2009

[“SMSC Hopes New Green Buildings will become LEED-Certified”](#)

### **EVENTS**

**2009 Minnesota Waste Wise Annual Meeting:**

**Environmentally Sustainable Business is Smart Business Despite the Economy**

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2009

11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

THE DAKOTA LODGE

1200 STASSEN LANE, WEST ST. PAUL

For more information or to register, visit [www.mnwastewise.org](http://www.mnwastewise.org)

**The Minnesota Road Show: Fleet Efficiency Workshops**

This workshop, the final in a series of four, is a partnership between Minnesota Waste Wise and Minnesota Environmental Initiative.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2009

7:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

LOCATION TBD

ROCHESTER

To register for this workshop, visit [www.mn-ei.org](http://www.mn-ei.org).

**The Big Green Conference**

Co-hosted by Larkin Hoffman Attorneys & Mall of America

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2009  
8:30 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.  
MALL OF AMERICA  
BLOOMINGTON

To register or for more information, visit the [Big Green Conference](#).

### **NEW MEMBER UPDATE**

Dean's Country Market, Perham  
Gosch's, Randall  
Super One, Baxter  
Schaefer's Foods, Nisswa  
White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church, Mahtomedi

### **MEMBERSHIP SERVICES**

Not a member but would like to join? Are you a current member wanting to take full advantage of your member benefits? Contact Kate Worley at (651) 292-4662 or [kworley@mnchamber.com](mailto:kworley@mnchamber.com).

Disclosure: Wise Mail is a tool to inform our members of current events or waste issues. The content of Wise Mail is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Minnesota Waste Wise does not endorse any of the following waste services, organizations or events. Any such portrayal is unintentional by Minnesota Waste Wise.

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