

Recycling

Some components of the solid waste stream are no longer deposited in the landfill but recycled for future use. Lawn and garden wastes such as branches, leaves and grass clippings are separated from the waste stream for composting at the Runge landfill. The compost is used mainly as final cover in reclamation of the facility. Tires and household appliances are no longer buried in the landfill. Tires are shipped out for use as fuel supplements and appliances are recycled through private salvage yards.

For a number of years, hazardous wastes have been banned from the nation's landfills. Sioux Falls periodically sponsors paint exchanges where residents can take unused paint. The paint is then mixed together for reuse. Hazardous household waste drop off sites are also available to residents. These programs are offered to the five-county region served by the Runge landfill.

Several recycling programs and private businesses operate in the region. Sioux Falls has adopted a recycling pickup program and some of the smaller communities have developed drop-off sites for recyclables. Programs are also available in the region to recycle or reuse a variety of materials including cardboard, newspaper, motor oil, office paper, magazines, tires, aluminum, ferrous metals, glass, plastics, and paper milk cartons. Employers have developed in-house programs to recycle waste products, most notably paper. A state grant program, funded from tonnage fees charged at landfills, has been established to assist businesses in developing and expanding sustainable recycling programs.

The various recycling programs have a number of benefits. In addition to removing potentially hazardous materials from the waste stream and reducing the potential for environmental degradation from improper disposal, these programs have greatly reduced the amount of material being deposited in the landfill. This will extend the life of the current landfill, delay costly expenditures in constructing new disposal sites, and avoid the NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) syndrome which confronts government officials when new sites are needed.

The illegal disposal of solid waste on private property and in rural road ditches has increased, in part because some residents find it more convenient and less expensive to dump their waste at unapproved sites rather than drive to the landfill. The county's nuisance ordinance along with public education programs and stronger penalties at the state level will assist in combating this problem.

Transfer facilities may necessarily become part of the regional approach to solid waste disposal. In neighboring Lincoln County, a transfer station is owned and operated by the county which serves a population of 15,000. Waste from the entire county, except the city of Beresford, is hauled to the facility where it is compacted, baled and then trucked to the Runge site for disposal. Lincoln County officials have found that the operational costs of the transfer station are more economical than maintaining their own landfill. Furthermore, compaction allows a greater volume of waste to be transported at a reduced cost. As the outlying population in Minnehaha County increases, one or more transfer stations may also be needed. Ideally, this should be a private sector approach among the region's waste haulers with local government support as needed.

The impact of regional population growth on future landfill space requirements can be lessened by reducing the waste stream through the implementation of effective solid waste reduction and recycling programs. Public information and education will assist in these endeavors.