

The Resource Conservation Challenge

What Can You Save Today?



The Resource Conservation Challenge is a major national effort to find flexible, yet more protective ways to conserve our valuable natural resources through waste reduction and energy recovery. Through this initiative, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) challenges us to:

- Increase the national recycling rate to 35 percent by 2005.
- Cut the generation of 30 priority chemicals in hazardous waste in half by 2005.

We're challenging all Americans to make smarter purchasing and disposal decisions that conserve our natural resources, save energy, and preserve the environment for our children and future generations. Because we live in a rapidly changing world, it is more important than ever for us to make sound environmental decisions.

Challenging Ourselves To Change Our Ways

Everyone has a role in preserving our environment. Through the Resource Conservation Challenge, we're asking makers of goods, sellers of goods, and buyers of goods to join us in a better way of doing business. We all must adopt a resource conservation ethic; operate more efficiently; purchase more wisely; and make and use products that are easy to recycle and composed of recycled materials.

"Today, we are challenging all Americans to take personal responsibility for their day-to-day decisions, and to take one small action everyday to conserve our natural resources."

**—EPA Assistant Administrator
Marianne Horinko**

While challenging us to recognize both the good and harmful impacts of our actions on our environment, we are committed to meeting the national waste reduction goals of the Challenge. Reaching these goals will result in a cleaner and safer environment with less waste, more economic growth,

and tremendous energy savings. For example, just by reducing priority chemicals in hazardous waste by 50 percent, we will eliminate 76 million pounds of these chemicals in the environment.

The Resource Conservation Challenge means more than conserving our natural resources. It also means reasonable waste management requirements and costs; fewer environmental releases and risks; less greenhouse gas emissions; and more energy savings and recovery.

Forming Partnerships To Meet the Challenge

We are using a broad range of approaches and tools to help businesses, manufacturers, and consumers reach the Resource Conservation Challenge goals. To help industries, states, and others reduce waste, we are forming partnerships designed to provide smarter, faster, voluntary solutions that safeguard our natural environment.

For example, under our National Waste Minimization Partners program, businesses have accepted our challenge to reduce one or more of 30 hazardous waste chemicals by changing manufacturing practices, and by reducing and recycling waste. Eliminating or reducing these chemicals protects us and our environment, and saves money and energy.

The founding partners of the National Waste Minimization Partnership Program are American Video Glass; Corning Asahi; Dow Chemical Corporation; International Truck and Engine; and Toyota Motor Manufacturing. Over the next 3 years, we will recruit at least 100 partners, from both Fortune 500 companies and small businesses. For complete details, see our website at <www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/consERVE/index.htm>.

Partners in Waste Reduction

The National Waste Minimization Partnership Program builds on the success of our large and well-known WasteWise Partnership Program. WasteWise Partners seek to reduce municipal solid waste through innovative waste prevention and recycling techniques. More than 1,200 partners from business, government, and institutions have voluntarily reduced more than 35 million tons of municipal solid waste.

The reduction in air emissions from the efforts of WasteWise Partners is equal to removing 19 million cars a year from the road.

Our WasteWise Partners continue to take on new challenges, such as encouraging the reuse and recycling of construction and demolition debris and the use of recycled products to create new "green buildings." Major retailers, mall management firms, and trade associations also are signing up to become WasteWise Partners to promote recycling in shopping malls and other retail areas.

Stimulating Infrastructure Development, Product Stewardship, and New Technologies

The success of any effort requires the systems and support that make it function. One facet of the Resource Conservation Challenge serves that function by providing infrastructure development and other opportunities to make it easier for businesses and consumers to:

- Reduce waste through reuse and recycling.
- Acquire and use recycled materials.
- Purchase products containing recycled materials.

We support the National Electronics Product Stewardship Initiative, which unites electronics manufacturers, recyclers, retailers, state and local governments, and nongovernmental organizations in a nationwide effort to reuse and recycle electronic products. By working together, we not only promote these efforts, we also can provide appropriate incentives for manufacturers to make even more environmentally sound products. Recycling used electronics prevents them from entering the waste stream, conserves valuable landfill space, and creates opportunities for beneficial reuse of valuable materials.

We are promoting the development of new and better recycling technologies and exploring ways to obtain energy or products from waste. By adjusting federal hazardous waste regulations to encourage and promote the recycling of used computer and television glass (otherwise known as cathode ray tubes), markets for these materials can develop and grow. Several pilot programs are underway throughout the country.

We support several on-going regional initiatives using revamped technologies to reduce or eliminate the use of virgin materials and recover energy to produce power and manage waste better.

E-recycling To Conserve Resources

Used electronic equipment is fast becoming one of the nation's largest wastes. In 2000 more than two million tons of consumer electronics were discarded—enough to fill a hole 1 acre in area that's 3.5 miles deep. To promote and find new opportunities to reduce this waste, we are engaged in a number of projects that support the collection, reuse, and recycling of used electronic equipment.

Working in partnership with the electronics industry and state environmental agencies in the Mid-Atlantic region, we are participating in an "e-cycling" alliance to give residents and small businesses the opportunity to recycle their computer equipment and televisions. So far, more than 600 tons of electronic material and 6,000 computer monitors and televisions, have been collected. We are building on this first-of-its-kind electronics collection and recycling partnership to expand e-cycling across the country.

Helping Businesses, Government, Institutions, and Tribes Be More Efficient

Education, training, outreach, and technology assistance are beneficial tools to help nearly every organization overcome barriers and costs that often accompany complex waste management strategies. We are helping businesses overcome these barriers, from offering hands-on help to reduce material and energy use, to identifying safe reuse options for certain by-product materials.

An example is the intricate work we're doing with the metal-finishing industry to reduce the amount of metals ending up in sludges, and our joint efforts to safely recover those that do.

We are helping other federal agencies promote markets for recyclable materials by providing information on waste reduction and recycling; developing tools to measure and track federal procurement; and establishing a database that encourages manufacturers to list recycled-content products in a timely manner.

Native American tribes are working with us on a sustainable development project in rural areas that incorporates waste reduction and energy-efficient concepts into economic development, community infrastructure, land use, and building design practices.

Engaging Youth and Educating People

According to recent Labor Department data, American teenagers spend at least \$141 billion a year. Indications are that this group will continue to spend more and more money on consumer products every year, so the importance of informing them about the environmental and economic benefits of reusing products, recycling products, and using recycled-content products becomes increasingly important.

Working with major retailers, electronic manufacturers, and the entertainment industry, we are reinforcing and renewing waste prevention and recycling messages nationwide. We are also spreading the conservation message on posters targeted to youth; on in-store display advertisements; and in print and broadcast public service announcements. We will especially target Hispanic, African-American, and Native American communities to foster environmental awareness and encourage waste reduction, recycling, and neighborhood revitalization.

Taking Responsibility

Even though many consumers, businesses, industries, and institutions have made impressive waste prevention and reduction efforts, we still generate several billion tons of waste annually. Instead of sending these wastes to landfills and incinerators, we all need to do more to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

The Resource Conservation Challenge asks each of us to be more aware of the benefits we gain from our waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and energy recovery efforts. Can you do one small thing every day to conserve our resources, and save and recover energy?

Demonstrating Progress

The Resource Conservation Challenge is being tracked in a number of ways. Our first Waste Minimization Trends Report describes trends in hazardous waste generation and management of the priority chemicals from 1991 to 1998. Using data collected through our Toxic Release Inventory (TRI), our data show a 44-percent reduction for 20 of the 30 priority chemicals.

We also have issued our annual report characterizing municipal solid waste in the U.S.: *Municipal Solid Waste in the United States: 2000 Facts and Figures*. Our current national recycling rate is 30 percent, nearly double the 1990 recycling rate. Our challenge is to meet or beat a national recycling rate of 35 percent by 2005.

Both of these reports are on the internet at the address provided under "For More Information."

For More Information

More information on the Resource Conservation Challenge is available at www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserve/index.htm. Your suggestions about how we can meet the challenge are welcome. E-mail us at oswchallenge@epa.gov or write to oswchallenge@epa.gov or write to:

U.S. EPA
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW (5305W)
Washington, DC 20460
Attn: RCC

Information can also be obtained by calling the RCRA Call Center. Call 703-412-9810 or TDD 703-412-3323 (hearing impaired), if you are within the Washington Metropolitan Area. Call 800-424-9346 or TDD 800-553-7672 if you are a long-distance caller.



Solid Waste and Emergency Response (5305W)
EPA530-F-02-031
www.epa.gov/osw