

What is integrated solid waste management?

Municipal solid waste is what we commonly think of as trash or garbage. It consists of everyday items such as product packaging, furniture, yard wastes, food scraps, newspapers and appliances. Because of the growth in the amount of materials we throw away, many communities across our state and nation have developed diverse management practices in handling trash, commonly referred to as **integrated solid waste management**.

This integrated approach offers up to five different management options in controlling the volume of waste. Those options include:

- Source Reduction – Developing practices at home, school and work that result in less waste being created and subsequently thrown away.
- Recycling – Developing a local or regional system that allows families, businesses and schools to separate recyclable items from their waste, and providing a place for them to be repaired, reused and/or processed and shipped for as raw materials for manufacturing purposes.
- Composting – Composting of organic materials, from back yard to community-wide applications, provides not only the opportunity to eliminate many organic materials from our garbage but also to improve our soil quality.
- Waste to Energy – Examples of this are taking large quantities of carbon based materials (large quantities of chipped wood, compost or shredded tires) and using them to provide energy for manufacturing processes.
- Land Filling Waste – Though it should be considered a last resort, land filling waste is a necessary element in solid waste management. Unfortunately, too many valuable, reusable materials (paper, plastics, metals, etc.) end up in land fills if the above options are not practiced as a part of a family's or community's solid waste management practices.

The goal of responsible integrated solid waste management is that each community's waste to be handled in the most effective, cost efficient, safe and environmentally beneficial manner that is financially and realistically possible. Integrated solid waste management practices, when operated responsibly, reduce the cost of a community's solid waste disposal.

Each of the above solid waste management options has both costs and benefits which must be weighed in individual communities and situations.