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About the Household Hazardous Waste Program

The Counties of Bucks, Delaware, Chester, Montgomery and the City of Philadelphia continue to partner together to host approximately 30+ Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and Electronics collection events every year. Please note that due to increased costs and traffic concerns, Montgomery County will hold separate electronics collection events in 2012. Residents will no longer be able to bring electronics to HHW events. The regional partnership allows residents of each County the opportunity to attend any of the events hosted in the region. It also allows the 5 County region to acquire the best possible price per pound, which in turn, saves valuable taxpayer dollars. In 2010, this regional partnership collected close to 3 million pounds of HHW and Electronics of which, Montgomery County accounted for approximately 1,000,000 of that total alone.

In 2008, this program received the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence through the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Professional Recycler of Pennsylvania 'Waste Watcher' award for Outstanding Achievement in Special Collection. Most recently, in 2011, the program has been recognized by the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association (NAHMMA) for the 'Longstanding Program Excellence' Award.

We hope that this award winning program will be able to continue to serve the needs of Montgomery County and the 4 Southeastern Pennsylvania County Region through the proper disposal and recycling of Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics into the future.

Historical Overview

Montgomery County has held household hazardous waste collections since 1989, when it was one of two county programs operating in Pennsylvania (the other was York County). The first collection event in Montgomery County was held on May 6, 1989 at the East Norriton Township building, where 467 residents participated. The county held 4 or 5 collection days per year over the next nine years.

In 1998, the county led an effort that resulted in the formation of a regional household hazardous waste collection partnership throughout southeastern Pennsylvania consisting of Bucks, Delaware, Chester, Montgomery Counties and the City of Philadelphia. At that time only Bucks County provided HHW collection services. This partnership was prompted by a study conducted by the Waste Watch Center and Pennsylvania Resources Council entitled, 'Feasibility Analysis of a Household Hazardous Waste System in Southeastern Pennsylvania'.

After it was determined that a regional program would be the best way to meet the needs of this metro area consisting of more than 3.5 million people, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection committed an Act 155 grant to fund the pilot collection. The Pennsylvania Act 155 of 1994 set up a grant program for local governments collecting household hazardous waste making it much more feasible and affordable. From that point on, the program was an instant success and has grown into the largest HHW collection program in the commonwealth.

Through an intergovernmental agreement, the 5 counties have been able to enjoy a shared administrative burden that often accompanies managing a HHW collection program. Every 3 years, the counties submit an RFP to choose a contractor capable of handling hazardous waste. This process enables the counties to achieve the best price, per pound, per material for all waste streams. In addition, the partnership also allows any resident the opportunity to attend up to 25-27 HHW collection events in the region allowing for a disposal option almost every other weekend of the year.

In 2002, the counties recognized electronics as a fast growing waste stream that needed to be addressed and as a result decided to collect electronics on the same day as HHW events. Like any new change, this was not without incident. At Chester County's first event with electronics, the contractor did not palletize, wrap and load trucks immediately upon off-loading resident vehicles. Instead, by waiting until the end, they found themselves on site until 2:00AM loading the trailers. Parking lot lights went off at some point, causing them to turn their truck lights in a circle pointing inwards to have light to work!

Over the years, the regional program has grown tremendously. Since 2004, the program has nearly doubled the amount of material collected and households participating. In 2010, approximately 3 million pounds of HHW and Electronics were collected by serving close to 30,000 households. With very little advertising, most events enjoy upwards of 1,000 to 2,000 cars attending each event. Montgomery County's portion of the program in 2010 accounted for approximately 1,000,000 pounds of HHW and electronics.

As the program looks forward to the future, the growing burdens of electronics and latex paint are at the forefront. On January, 1 2012, the Pennsylvania Act 108 – Covered Device Recycling Act will require manufacturers to take back and recycle their market share of electronics in the state. 55% of all material brought to HHW and Electronics events is e-waste, which leads to increased traffic, wait times and increased costs to each county. It is for these reasons, that Montgomery County will NOT accept electronics at HHW events beginning 2012. Separate electronics collections will be offered to both relieve traffic congestion and decrease costs.

With no extended producer responsibility law in place, HHW programs in Pennsylvania that take in latex paint have very few options but to throw this material in the trash. Educating residents about the proper disposal methods of latex paint is constant. The latex paint that makes it way into HHW events becomes an unwanted cost and burden to each county that can be avoided. In 2010, Montgomery County spent close to \$80,000 on latex paint and other non-hazardous materials that were brought to HHW events.

The program has been recognized for its successes by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, receiving the "Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence" in 1999 and 2008. The program has also been recognized for outstanding achievement in special collections by receiving a "Waste Watcher" award in 2007 through the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania, the state's recycling organization. Most recently, in 2011 the program is being recognized by the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association (NAHMMA) for 'Longstanding Program Excellence'!