



# Do Keepers of Hazardous Materials Know Who They Are and What to Do?

“...A universal environmental ethic is the only guide by which humanity and the rest of life can be safely conducted through the bottleneck into which our species has foolishly blundered.”

EDWARD O. WILSON, *THE FUTURE OF LIFE*

## Audience

- ~ planning and zoning board members
- ~ conservation commissioners
- ~ wetlands commissioners
- ~ health officers
- ~ fire departments
- ~ zoning boards of appeal

Contemporary society is perpetually engaged in manufacturing, purchasing, storing, using, generating, and discarding chemical products and wastes that pose varying degrees of risk to human health and the environment. One of the most difficult problems we face is determining how much risk we are willing to accept. In the case of source water protection areas, it is important that we accept as little risk as possible.

To address the huge volumes of municipal and industrial solid waste generated nationwide, Congress enacted the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Since then, U.S. EPA has developed a comprehensive program to ensure that hazardous wastes are managed safely from the time they are generated to their ultimate disposal—from cradle to grave. Most New England states have authority to implement their own RCRA programs that are consistent with, if not more stringent than, the federal program.

This cradle-to-grave management program is one of the most comprehensive requirements that EPA has ever developed. U.S. EPA and the states continue to improve the program by promoting new initiatives, such as encouraging waste minimization, improving the federal/state partnership in the hazardous waste program, and aiding state and local governments in reaping the environmental and economic benefits of source reduction and recycling.

## Where Are the Hazardous Materials and What Can You Do About Them?

**RCRA** programs regulate the generation and storage of hazardous waste, but they typically do not have jurisdiction over facilities that use hazardous non-waste materials or the location of facilities. Many hazardous materials (e.g., those used at homes, schools, public works facilities) are not subject to RCRA regulations—this is where community efforts are particularly important!

For a municipality, any threat to drinking water is a concern, so consider following some basic common-sense tenets:

- **Be aware.** Make sure you know what types of materials are located in the source protection area and how to deal with any spills, accidents, and fires. Make sure homeowners and businesses know about such threats and what they can do to protect the water supply.
- **Keep contamination out.** The best way to protect your water supply is to keep potential contamination sources out of the source protection area. If you can't keep a potential contamination source out of your source protection area, you can limit the size or scale.
- **Enforce proper maintenance and practice.** If a business or facility is using a potentially hazardous material, make sure proper best management practices (BMPs) are in place to protect the water supply.
- **Know when there is a problem.** Require facilities in the source protection area that use or store hazardous materials to promptly notify the town and water supplier when there are spills or accidents involving hazardous materials.
- **Consider potential future uses.** What happens when the property changes hands?

## Strategies for Action

✓ **Consider establishing a comprehensive hazardous materials management program to prevent the contamination of present and future source water.**

Take a close look at existing hazardous waste threats in your source water protection area and review existing ordinances, programs, and policies to see if you can do more to prevent water supply contamination.

✓ **Take advantage of readily available GIS map resources to inventory all land uses that might handle hazardous wastes/materials in your source protection area.**

Make it a point to keep this information updated so your map can be a useful planning and emergency response tool.

✓ **Review municipal regulatory/best management requirements to see if potential threats from hazardous materials and wastes are addressed adequately in your source protection area.**

Zoning is the most powerful tool local governments have to ensure that new hazardous materials and waste sources are not located in source water protection areas, so you can focus your management activities on existing facilities.



### What Types of Businesses Are Likely to Produce Hazardous Wastes?

- automobile maintenance and body shops
- electroplaters and metal fabricators or finishers
- printers
- photographic and x-ray processors
- dry cleaners
- chemical laboratories (including schools and universities)
- furniture manufacturers and strippers
- construction
- pest control
- chemical manufacturing
- textile manufacturing
- funeral services
- arts and craft studios

✓ **Establish a program to reduce, eliminate, recycle, or reuse hazardous materials and wastes in all municipally owned facilities.**

Identify town-owned facilities that use or store hazardous materials. Evaluate management practices at these locations as well as in routine operations, such as road maintenance and landscape care. Install model practices at town facilities.

✓ **Educate homeowners, businesses, and local officials about the importance of proper hazardous materials and waste management.**

Provide various audiences with appropriate guidance on proper operation and maintenance.

✓ **Explore financing options for the various aspects of your hazardous materials management program.**

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more detailed information, check out "Water Today...Water Tomorrow? Protecting Drinking Water Sources in Your Community: Tools for Municipal Officials" at [www.neiwpc.org](http://www.neiwpc.org). To find out more about your state's hazardous waste management program:

Connecticut: (888) 424-4193

<http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/index.htm>

Maine: (207)287-2651

<http://www.maine.gov/dep/rwm/index.htm>

Massachusetts: (617) 292-5753

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/bwp/bwpprogs.htm>

New Hampshire: (603) 271-2942

<http://www.des.state.nh.us/HWCS/>

Rhode Island: (401) 222-6800

<http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/benviron/waste/index.htm>

Vermont: (802)-241-3888

<http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/rcra/rcrahome.htm>