



HEALTH AND SAFETY

in the Waste Industry

Industry Strategy



FOREWARD

I am delighted to provide the foreward for this strategy and to have the opportunity to thank all involved in preparing what is a significant initiative for the waste industry.

The waste industry has grown rapidly over the last ten years. Major changes in how waste is perceived and managed in society have required our industry to move quickly. The industry's unique nature means that it now faces some unique injury prevention challenges. Twenty years ago, waste went to the tip. Now resources are recovered, contaminated sites are remediated, organics are composted, landfills are now highly technical worksites... the list is endless.

Changes in work practices and technological advances have meant that waste industry operations require a flexible and adaptable workforce with a variety of skills.

Excellence in health and safety is more than complying with codes of practice. It is about creating a safe environment for workers and the industry. Leading the way in best practice will require industry and local government working in partnership.

This document provides an overall direction for the industry to head as well as some minimum acceptable agreed standards on some recent problem areas for all parties in the waste sector.

I would like to acknowledge the support ACC have given with the production of this strategy and the valuable advice from the Department of Labour.



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1. INTRODUCTION

This document is a brief overview of the strategy for health and safety in the waste management industry. It outlines the backdrop against which this strategy has been developed, the strategy's purpose and its envisaged implementation.



2. ABOUT THE STRATEGY

2.1 Vision and outcomes

To reduce the human, social and financial cost of waste sector workplace injury and illness. This strategy sets out a way forward to achieve safe and healthy workplaces for those involved in the waste industry.

Three interconnecting outcomes support the vision:

- Information sharing nationally
- Collaborative viewpoints on health and safety issues in the waste management sector
- Developing standards on evidence based best practice.

2.2 Purpose of this strategy

The strategy is intended to do two things. Firstly, to provide an overarching direction for health and safety in the waste and recoverable resources industry. Secondly, to identify a number of risk areas within the industry to be worked on over the next two years.

An emphasis has been on priorities in high risk collection operations, which should significantly reduce accident and death rates in this area of the industry.

Some areas of the waste industry in New Zealand, for example hazardous waste, already have effective health and safety measures in place. It is envisaged that work programmes developed as a result of implementing this strategy will allow best practice health and safety standards for further areas of the industry to be developed and become established.

Further, having the strategy in place will also assist with the implementation of the New Zealand Workplace Health and Safety Strategy to 2015.

2.3 Developing the strategy

2.3.1 BACKGROUND

Following a number of fatalities in the industry, a working group was set up in April 2002 to address issues around these fatalities and improve health and safety in the industry. This initial group consisted of members of a selection of waste industry companies including Envirowaste Services Limited, Waste Management NZ Ltd, Metropolitan Waste, Onyx Services Limited and Streetsmart.

2.3.2 SECTOR GROUP

In 2004 the group was set up as a sector group within WasteMINZ to further the objectives of the first working group. The group, known as Safety@ WasteMINZ, is recognised as a safer industry group for the waste industry by ACC and the Department of Labour and has representation on the Road Transport Safety Group Forum.

WasteMINZ is the Waste Management Institute of New Zealand, a non-profit society founded in 1989. The institute has offices in Auckland and Wellington. Members are from all areas of the waste management world and include collectors and disposers of waste, recyclers, engineers, scientists, educators, government departments, territorial and regional councils, and consultants. Members range from large multinationals and medium sized businesses to small rural councils or one person consultancies.

Safety@WasteMINZ has been responsible for developing this strategy and has consulted widely on the content. Working parties established by the Safety @ WasteMINZ steering committee will be responsible for future work programmes.

3. THE INDUSTRY

The management of waste in New Zealand involves private business, local councils and partnerships between councils and business. The industry is wide in scope and includes:

- household waste collection
- kerbside recycling collection
- hazardous waste processing facilities
- contaminated land management
- landfills (solid waste classes A and B, clean fills and monofills)
- transfer stations
- organic resource collection and processing
- resource recovery parks
- special waste management, collection and processing (used oil, used tyres, e-waste, agrichemicals, paints, construction and demolition material)
- liquid waste processing
- resource recovery material processing plants
- industrial and commercial waste collection.

Local government spending on solid waste management is approximately \$221 million each year. Total spending on solid waste management is approximately \$400 million. For liquid waste management, spending is approximately \$580 million each year. For privately owned solid waste management companies, annual turnover is in the region of \$320 million.

These figures do not include private sector turnover in resource recovery, contaminated land management, hazardous waste processing or special waste management.

Major waste management company operations in New Zealand employ approximately 8000 employees.

4. INDUSTRY GOALS

Ten goals (from the Safety@WasteMINZ Strategic plan) are described in this strategy. Making progress with each of these over the next five years will require all in the waste industry to work together and subsequently achieve the vision. The goals are listed below.

- 4.1 To establish and maintain a support network for those actively involved in health and safety in the waste management industry.
- 4.2 To establish a professional group to disseminate credible, targeted, co-ordinated and consistent information.
- 4.3 To facilitate opportunities for communication, co-operation and exchange of ideas and experiences.
- 4.4 To encourage increased professionalism across the industry.
- 4.5 To propose and establish relevant best practice standards or guidelines and encourage their adoption by the industry.
- 4.6 To establish communications systems to enable industry consultation and decision making, and to inform and influence decision makers.
- 4.7 To provide formal response and comment on health and safety issues and policies affecting the industry.
- 4.8 To provide a national link for government agencies and other key stakeholders to seek advice on national health and safety projects and advance their implementation.
- 4.9 To identify and encourage strategic and commercially relevant research and development.
- 4.10 To continue and review the strategic plan for the industry.

5. KEY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Key partners working with WasteMINZ and the Safety@ WasteMINZ sector group to achieve this strategy's goals are:

- waste sector companies
- local authorities
- Accident Compensation Corporation
- Department of Labour
- Local Government New Zealand
- workplace unions.

Advice will be sought from:

- Ministry of Transport
- Land Transport New Zealand
- NZ Police (Commercial Vehicle Investigation Unit).

The assistance of supply and service industries to the waste management industry will also be sought.

6. STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

6.1 Change in culture

A change in culture and attitudes towards health and safety (at all levels within the industry) may be necessary to achieve the vision and goals. Industry self-management, advocacy and leadership are important components of the changes necessary. Safety@WasteMINZ will encourage and facilitate changes to attitudes and values associated with health and safety in the waste sector.

6.2 Industry commitment to vision and goals

Safety@WasteMINZ members undertake individually to support the strategy as a whole and to report their own actions towards its implementation in an open and transparent manner.

6.3 A way forward for the industry

Progressively evolving operational standards, guidance notes and priorities will be central to achieving a satisfactory level of health and safety performance within this sector.

An industry health and safety work programme will be started. The work programme is intended to assist with promoting excellence in health and safety management within the industry. The programme, developed over time, will include:

- identifying ways to promote the systematic management of health and safety
- establishing industry-level targets for reductions in occupational injury and disease
- setting out a means of monitoring industry health and safety practices both nationally and internationally
- providing a mechanism for developing and promoting health and safety action plans at an industry level which are focused on achieving outcomes and targets
- developing and promoting industry-specific guidance material on all practicable steps, and health and safety best practice
- setting a framework to co-ordinate industry-specific research into health and safety issues
- indentifying key personnel capable of advising on health and safety competencies and providing training programmes
- providing a mechanism for feedback to the Department of Labour on compliance policies for the industry.

A work plan will be prepared setting out commitments and constraints to taking the work programme further. Key elements of the work plan are set out in the following sections.

7. PROJECT AREA PRIORITIES

Listed below are areas where detailed guidance notes /codes of practice or research are likely to be required. The work plan to be prepared in 2006/2007 will set out details of project priorities and a schedule for completing the work.

- Waste management contracts and health and safety
- Fleet and plant design guidance
- Manual of bags handling
- Industry survey and reporting
- Hazard ID checklists
- Competence systems to evaluate competence for high risk activities
- Personal protective equipment for the waste sector
- Plant hire
- Temporary staff and agency staff hire
- Training resources
- Resource recovery plant, for example shredders
- Vehicle specifications and use, for example rear loader compactors, front lift bin collectors
- Industry research requirements
- Landfill health and safety guidelines
- Resource recovery park health and safety guidelines.

8. THE HEALTH AND SAFETY IN EMPLOYMENT ACT 1992

The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 has the principal objective of providing for the prevention of harm to employees at work. The Act places duties on employers, self-employed people and employees to ensure that their work activities do not harm themselves or other people.

Mandatory requirements are designed to help ensure operations are managed safely. The mandatory requirements include:

- hazard management
- information and training
- accident reporting and investigation
- emergency procedures
- employee participation.

Compliance with the requirements of the Act is best achieved by building a structure for health and safety to ensure it becomes a part of core business.

9. MANAGING HEALTH AND SAFETY – FIRST STEPS

The Health and Safety in Employment Act (1992) and systems such as those detailed in the standard AS/NZS 4801: 2001 provide procedures for developing, implementing and reviewing health and safety systems.

9.1 Hazards management

It is important to have an effective hazard management system to identify, assess and control health and safety hazards in the workplace. Consultation with employees, health and safety representatives and contractors to assist with developing commitment and maximising the knowledge input is critical.

9.1.1 HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

Hazard identification needs to be conducted at any workplace where work is undertaken.

9.1.2 HAZARD ASSESSMENT

The best way to determine priorities for hazard control is to employ a systematic hazard assessment process. Safe systems of work can then be put in place to control the hazard. A good hazard assessment takes into account actual or potential cause or source of harm occurring as a result of exposure to the hazard.

9.1.3 HIERARCHY OF HAZARD CONTROL

Imposes that, where practicable, a significant hazard must be eliminated. If elimination is not practicable the hazard must be isolated. If it is not practicable to eliminate or isolate the hazard completely then the employer must minimise the likelihood that the hazard will cause harm.

9.2 Information and training

The provision of information and training is important to ensure all persons working at or visiting a workplace have knowledge of:

- Hazards they may create or may be exposed to
- Emergency response
- The safe use of plant and substances
- Safe, correct use and storage of personal protective equipment, clothing and safety devices

In the absence of this knowledge these persons must be supervised.

9.3 Accident reporting and investigation

All workplace accidents that have or could have resulted in injury or illness must be reported, recorded and investigated. All accidents that result in serious harm shall be reported to the Department of Labour.

9.4 Emergency preparation

Employers must prepare for emergency situations to enable a rapid effective response that minimises the likelihood of injury or illness

9.5 Employee participation

Employers have a general duty to involve employees in health and safety matters.

10. DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

10.1 Governance

Safety@WasteMINZ is a sector group administered by the Waste Management Institute of New Zealand (WasteMINZ). The board of WasteMINZ does have oversight of the sector group. However, the Safety@WasteMINZ committee has the ability to manage its affairs.

The committee's role is to provide leadership and ensure consultation and co-ordination between businesses, local government and central government on issues related to safety in the waste sector.

10.1.1 MEMBERSHIP

Membership of Safety@WasteMINZ is open to any member of WasteMINZ. Organisations that are not members of WasteMINZ are welcome to use some resources; however for other resources there will be an additional non-member fee.

10.1.2 COMMITTEE

Membership of the committee is voluntary. Should the need arise, elections will be held every three years

10.1.3 CHAIRPERSON

Committee members elect the committee chairperson. The chairperson is re-elected every three years.

10.1.4 DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

Committee members elect the committee's deputy chairperson. The deputy chairperson is re-elected every three years.

10.1.5 MEETINGS

Safety@ WasteMINZ committee meetings are held quarterly.

10.2 Administration and finance

WasteMINZ provides secretariat services for Safety@WasteMINZ.

10.3 Communication

Safety @ WasteMINZ aims to provide:

- networking opportunities at seminars, conferences and workshops
- an up to date and information rich website, online message forum and regular online industry updates
- regular industry surveys, which will be carried out to obtain feedback on initiatives.

10.4 Developing key partnerships and stakeholders

Key partners working with WasteMINZ and the Safety@ WasteMINZ sector group to achieve this strategy's goals are:

- waste sector companies
- local authorities
- Accident Compensation Corporation
- Department of Labour
- Local Government New Zealand
- workplace unions.

10.4.1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

WasteMINZ will:

- promote this strategy among all members
- encourage members to produce health and safety programmes, key performance indicators and workplace plans relevant to their workplaces.

The Safety@WasteMINZ committee will:

- review this strategy in 2010
- act as the point of contact between ACC and the Department of Labour
- support the work programmes in place arising from the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy for New Zealand
- identify key areas where health and safety improvements can be made in the industry
- represent Safety@WasteMINZ on working groups and government committees as agreed by the committee
- work with and encourage members to implement health and safety plans and provide information for the annual survey
- develop and publish health and safety plans, practice notes and reports which contribute to the implementation of this strategy
- identify relevant data to allow industry health and safety advances
- encourage remedial action where required.

Members of Safety@ WasteMINZ will be encouraged to:

- singly or co-operatively develop strategies and implementation programmes relevant to their workplaces
- report to Safety@WasteMINZ on programmes and initiatives they are implementing
- provide input to Safety@WasteMINZ working groups
- provide health and safety data for the annual survey
- provide for health and safety management in contracts they may let.

11. THE FUTURE

Health and safety in the waste sector is an industry responsibility. However, partners also have a role. Safety@WasteMINZ will perform an advocacy role both to health and safety regulators and within the market. Key areas include:

- identifying legislative changes that may be required and consulting with appropriate agencies to determine if this can take place
- working with regulators on policy structures in place or required
- identifying where compliance actions may or may not be needed and encouraging commercial quality in health and safety
- developing relationships with agencies as appropriate
- providing public information where public perceptions may not accurately reflect the state of the industry.

Good health and safety systems require good information, particularly if best practice is to be promoted. Safety@WasteMINZ will:

- carry out regular surveys to provide a national picture of ill-health, accident and near-hit incidences. An annual survey starting in 2007 will provide baseline measures and enable monitoring of change in injury rates over time.
- provide an annual report recording and analysing the state of health and safety within the sector
- work with health and safety professionals to identify research priorities for the industry.

Safety@Wasteminz is committed to working with others in the industry and with partners to ensure health and safety in the waste sector moves forward. Safety @ WasteMINZ will report on successes in implementing the strategy as a whole and progress towards achieving the vision and goals

A helpful guide to making workplaces safer

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