

Environmentally Sound Management

A central goal of the Basel Convention is “environmentally sound management” (ESM), the aim of which is to protect human health and the environment by minimizing hazardous waste production whenever possible. ESM means addressing the issue through an “integrated life-cycle approach”, which involves strong controls from the generation of a hazardous waste to its storage, transport, treatment, reuse, recycling, recovery and final disposal.

Many companies have already demonstrated that “cleaner production” methods which eliminate or reduce hazardous outputs can be both economically and environmentally efficient. The United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP) Division on Technology, Industry and Economics works to identify and disseminate “best practices” (<http://www.unepie.org/>). In the coming decade, the Secretariat will put more emphasis on creating partnerships with industry and research institutions to create innovative approaches to ESM.

One of the most critical aspects of ESM is lowering demand for products and services that result in hazardous by-products. Consumers need to educate themselves as to the methods used in production processes and think about what they buy every day.

Achieving ESM

To achieve environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, a number of legal, institutional and technical conditions need to be met, particularly that:

- a regulatory and enforcement infrastructure ensures compliance with applicable regulations;
- sites or facilities are authorized and of an adequate standard of technology and pollution control to deal with hazardous wastes in the way proposed, in particular taking into account the level of technology and pollution control in the exporting country;
- operators of sites or facilities at which hazardous wastes are managed are required, as appropriate, to monitor the effects of those activities;
- appropriate action is taken in cases where monitoring gives indications that the management of hazardous wastes has resulted in unacceptable emissions;
- people involved in the management of hazardous wastes are capable and adequately trained in their capacity.

In addition, a number of activities should be carried out in this context, including:

- the identification and quantifying of the types of waste being produced nationally;
- a best practice approach to avoid or minimise the generation of hazardous wastes and reduce their toxicity, such as the use of cleaner production methods or

approaches
the provision of sites or facilities authorised as environmentally sound to manage
wastes, and in particular hazardous wastes.