



Teacher's Resource

GLOSSARY

A

aerate – To expose to the circulation of air, as in aerating a compost pile.

aeration – A process that promotes biological degradation of organic matter in water. The process may be passive (as when waste is exposed to air) or active (as when a mixing or bubbling device introduces the air).

aerobic – Able to live and grow in the presence of free oxygen. Aerobic bacterial decomposition results in the conversion of organic wastes to compost.

aluminum – A light, strong, silver-colored metal made mostly of bauxite ore. One of the most common materials accepted for recycling.

anaerobic – Able to live and grow only in the absence of free oxygen; anaerobic decomposition of organic wastes by bacteria results in the production and release of methane gas.

avoided waste disposal costs – The amount of money that is saved by not disposing of recyclables as trash. Waste haulers charge customers a disposal fee for each pound or ton disposed or the number of times a waste container is picked up. Thus, it is important to include the avoided disposal cost as part of the savings that result from recycling.

B

biodegradable – Capable of being broken down by microorganisms into simple, stable compounds such as carbon dioxide and water.

Btu (British thermal unit) – The amount of heat needed to increase the temperature of 1 pound of water 1⁰ Fahrenheit at sea level.

burn barrel – A barrel, usually a 55-gallon drum, in which household garbage is burned. It is against the law to burn household garbage in South Carolina.

buy recycled – Purchasing products made from or that contain materials with recycled content.

C

cadmium – A soft, bluish-white metallic element occurring primarily in zinc, copper, and lead ores, that is easily cut with a knife and is used in low-friction, fatigue-resistant alloys, solders, dental amalgams, nickel-cadmium storage batteries, nuclear reactor shields and in rustproof electroplating.

carbon – A nonmetallic element found in some inorganic and all organic materials. Occurs naturally as diamonds and graphite.

carcinogen – A substance that can cause cancer.

caution – In hazardous household products labeling, caution means be careful. The product should be used with care.

cell – An area in a landfill where solid waste is disposed of each day.

chasing arrows – The universal recycling symbol. The three arrows symbolize the steps that complete recycling – collection; processing and manufacturing; and buying recycled. Also known as closing the loop.

chemicals – Substances with a distinct molecular composition that are produced by or used in a chemical process.

Class 3 landfill – Any landfill, publicly or privately owned, that receives household waste – also known as municipal solid waste. The landfill may also receive other types of solid waste, including commercial waste, non-hazardous sludge and industrial solid waste.

compost – The product resulting from the decomposition of organic materials such as yard trimmings and food scraps. Compost can be used as a soil conditioner.

composting – The conversion of organic materials to humus by microorganisms. Composting is an effective solid waste management method for reducing the organic portion of garbage, including lawn clippings, leaves, food scraps and manure.

compost pile – A place, such as an outside pit or bin, set aside for composting food scraps and yard trimmings.

consumer – A person who buys goods or services.

consuming/consumption – Buying and using goods or services.

corrosive – In hazardous household products labeling, corrosive means that a product may eat through other items.

D

danger – In hazardous household products labeling, danger means that exposure or unsafe use may cause injury, illness or death.

debris – Leftover waste, often from a storm or building construction or deconstruction.

decomposition – To break down into component parts or basic elements;

decomposition of organic waste materials by bacteria is a fundamental life process because it makes essential nutrients available for use by plants and animals.

DHEC (The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control) – DHEC was created in 1973 when the State Board of Health and the Pollution Control Authority merged. DHEC is responsible for protecting the state's environment and the health of South Carolinians.

dioxin – A group of compounds that are extremely toxic.

disposal – The act or process of getting rid of something.

do-it-yourselfer (DIYer) – A term for people who choose to change their own motor oil. These people are the focus of campaigns to get people to recycle their used motor oil.

dump – An open, unmanaged, illegal disposal site used instead of a permitted landfill.

E

Earth Day – Held on April 22 each year to promote awareness of environmental issues, the first Earth Day was in 1970.

embedded energy – The total amount of energy an item uses during its lifetime.

endanger – To expose to harm or danger.

environmental impact – A positive or negative effect on an environment.

environmental shopping – The practice of making purchasing decisions based on a commitment to preserving the environment. Environmental shopping includes buying recycled products, products with a minimum of packaging and products that are not harmful when manufactured locally and can be recycled.

EPA – The acronym for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It is the federal agency of the U.S. government that sets environmental

protection and enforcement standards. The EPA was created in 1970 and serves the entire country through its regional offices. South Carolina is in Region IV. The agency's headquarters is in Washington, D.C.

estimate – To make a judgment.

e-waste – Electronic waste such as televisions and computers.

explosive – In hazardous household products labeling, explosive means to product can explode if used, stored or disposed of improperly.

F

fertilizer – A material such as compost or a chemical compound added to soil to increase its fertility.

finite – Having bounds, limited. Finite commonly refers to non-renewable energy sources, such as fossil fuels.

flammable – In hazardous household products labeling, flammable means the product is easily ignited and capable of burning rapidly.

G

garbage – Another word for solid waste, particularly household waste.

generation – The act or process of producing solid waste.

glass – The container or packaging for many products including beverages and food. Glass can be recycled again and again with no loss in quality or purity. Glass containers go from the recycling bin to a store shelf in as little as 30 days – again and again.

glassphalt – A highway paving material in which recovered ground glass replaces some of the gravel in asphalt.

grasscycling – Refers to a method of source reduction whereby grass clippings are left on the lawn rather than bagged and set out for collection.

greenhouse gases – Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere.

groundwater – Water beneath the Earth's surface, often between saturated soil and rock that supplies wells and springs

H

hazardous – Dangerous.

hazardous household products – Products found around the home, usually in small amounts, that can harm people or the environment. Examples of hazardous household products include paint, pesticides, cleaning supplies and batteries. Hazardous household products are not regulated as hazardous materials by South Carolina law, but are considered part of the municipal solid waste stream. Because of the nature of hazardous household products, they should be stored properly and disposed of separately from solid waste.

humus – Organic material consisting of decayed vegetable matter that provides nutrients for plants and increases water retention. A natural, rich, soil conditioner that is the result of composting.

I-K

incineration – The burning of waste.

incinerator – A furnace for burning garbage or other waste under controlled conditions. A waste-to-energy incinerator burns waste to produce useful energy. Incinerators are federally regulated.

L

landfill – A large, outdoor site for the burial of solid waste.

leachate – Water that collects contaminants as it trickles through garbage, pesticides or fertilizer. Leachate can occur in farming areas, feed lots and landfills, and may result in hazardous substances entering surface water, groundwater or soil.

lead – A heavy metal that is hazardous to human health if breathed or swallowed. Its use in gasoline, paints, and plumbing compounds has been sharply restricted or eliminated by federal laws and regulations.

litter – Waste thrown away in an inappropriate place; improperly stored waste that has escaped from its container; misplaced solid waste. Littering is against the law in South Carolina.

littering – The act of intentionally or carelessly discarding solid waste in an inappropriate place.

M

man-made – Made by human beings rather than occurring in nature.

materials recovery facility (MRF, pronounced ‘murf’) – A facility that sorts and processes collected recyclables for end users.

methane – The major component of natural gas.

methane gas – A colorless, odorless, flammable and explosive gas produced by decomposing garbage and other organic materials.

MRF – See materials recovery facility.

mulch – A layer of material such as wood chips or straw placed around plants to hold moisture, prevent weeds and enrich the soil.

municipal solid waste (MSW) – The combined residential and commercial solid waste generated in an area. MSW includes paper, cans, bottles, food scraps, yard waste and other items. Industrial process waste, agricultural waste, mining waste and sewage sludge are not MSW.

N

natural – Present in or produced by nature.

natural resources – Valuable, naturally-occurring items such as plants, animals, minerals, water and air that are used by people to help make things such as energy, food, clothing and buildings.

newspaper – A publication, usually issued daily or weekly, containing current news, editorials, feature articles, and usually advertising. Newspapers are printed on newsprint – an inexpensive paper made from wood pulp.

nitrogen – A colorless, tasteless, odorless element that, as a gas, is relatively inert. Nitrogen makes up 78 percent of the atmosphere by volume and occurs as a constituent of all living tissues.

nonrenewable resources – Natural resources which, because of their scarcity, the length of time required to form them, or their rapid depletion, are considered finite in amount, such as petroleum, coal, natural gas and copper.

O

Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling – An office established by the S. C. Solid Waste Policy and Management Act of 1991. The office is non-regulatory and non-enforcement. It is responsible for public awareness and education, technical assistance and grant funding to local governments, public and private schools, colleges and universities regarding solid waste management issues.

oil – Any of the various kinds of greasy, combustible substances obtained from animal, vegetable and mineral sources. Oils are liquid at ordinary temperatures and can be dissolved in certain organic solvents, but not in water. Petroleum is the most common form of oil.

open burning – The uncontrolled burning of household and other types of waste, e.g., burning household garbage in a barrel or burning leaves. It is against the law to burn household garbage in South Carolina.

open dump – A large open area where trash is illegally thrown. These areas are also called illegal dumps.

organic – An object containing the element carbon, such as plants and animals. Made from living organisms.

organic material – Discarded living material such as yard trimmings and food scraps.

P-Q

packaging – The wrapper, container or plastic film used to protect, identify and advertise a product.

pesticide – Any substance designed to kill living organisms, including insects (insecticides), plants (herbicides), fungi (fungicides), rats and mice (rodenticides), and bacteria (germicides).

petroleum – A natural, flammable, liquid hydrocarbon mixture found principally beneath the earth’s surface and processed to make gasoline, natural gas, naphtha, fuel and lubricating oils. Also called crude oil.

photosynthesis – The process by which green plants synthesize carbohydrates from carbon dioxide and water using light as an energy source and releasing oxygen as a by-product.

plankton – The collection of small or microscopic organisms, including algae, that float or drift in great numbers in fresh or salt water and serve as food for larger organisms.

plastic – A material made from hydrocarbons known for its light weight and durability. Plastic can be rigid or pliable.

plastic bottles – Containers used to hold soft drinks, water, milk and other beverages as well as other products such as laundry detergent and shampoo.

poison – A substance that can cause injury, illness or death.

pollution – Harmful substances deposited in the air, water, or on land, leading to contamination of the environment.

pollution prevention – Identifying areas, processes and activities that create excessive waste products or pollutants in order to reduce or prevent them through alteration or eliminating a process.

population – All of the people inhabiting a specified area; the total number of such people.

population growth rate – A measurement on how quickly or slowly the population is increasing in a specific area.

post-consumer materials – Recovered materials collected from consumer oriented recycling collection system or drop-off center.

pre-consumer materials – Recovered materials obtained from manufacturers, such as cutting scraps from printers. Waste generated before the product reaches the consumer.

precycle – To reduce waste at the source by changing buying habits.

R

raw material – An unprocessed natural resource used in manufacturing.

reactive – In hazardous household products labeling, reactive means a product is unstable and may undergo violent chemical change.

recyclables – Products or materials that can be collected, separated and processed to be used as raw materials in the manufacture of new products.

recycle – To collect, separate, process and market materials so they can be used again.

recycled content – The percent of a product's weight or package's weight that is composed of materials that have been recovered from waste. Recycled content may include pre-consumer and post-consumer materials.

recycling center – Drop-off sites that accept recyclables. Some sites also accept household garbage providing a one-stop service.

recycling loop – The cycle of collecting and processing, manufacturing products with recycled content and purchasing products containing recycled materials. Consumers "close the recycling loop" when they buy recycled-content items.

reduce – To lessen in amount. Reducing trash is a major solid waste management goal.

reject – To refuse to accept, submit to, believe or make use of.

renewable resource – A natural resource derived from an endless or cyclical source (e.g., sun, wind, trees, fish); with proper management and wise use, replacement of these resources by natural or human-assisted systems can be approximately equal to their consumption.

resource – A supply of something that can be used or drawn upon. Something that can be used to make something else such as wood into paper, bauxite ore into aluminum, old bottles into new ones and sand into glass.

resource recovery – A practice that conserves natural resources by extracting used materials such as paper, glass and metals as well as energy from the waste stream and reprocessing them for reuse.

reuse – The use of a product more than once for any purpose. Examples include using a butter tub as an alternate food container or reusing a coffee can to hold nuts and bolts.

S

signal words – Specific words used on hazardous household products to warn consumers on the proper use, storage and disposal of the product, e.g., CAUTION, EXPLOSIVE, FLAMMABLE, REACTIVE, POISONOUS and TOXIC.

soil – The top layer of the Earth's surface.

solid waste – Garbage or trash. In the S.C. Solid Waste Policy and Management Act of 1991, solid waste is defined as any garbage, refuse, or sludge from a waste treatment facility, water supply plant or air pollution control facility; and other discarded material. It also includes solid, liquid, semi-solid or contained gaseous material resulting from industrial, commercial, mining and agricultural operations and community activities.

solid waste management – The supervised handling, processing and disposal of all solid waste.

source reduction – The practice of designing, manufacturing, buying and using materials (e.g., products and packaging) in ways that reduce the amount of waste generated.

S.C. Solid Waste Policy and Management Act of 1991 – The first comprehensive law dealing with solid waste management in South Carolina. The law established a policy of promoting solid waste reduction, recycling and reuse of materials before landfilling or incineration. It set a goal

of reducing the amount of solid waste being received at municipal solid waste landfills and incinerators by 30 percent, calculated by weight, by May 1997. It also set a goal of recycling 25 percent, calculated by weight, of the total waste stream by May 1997.

sustainability – The ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. An environmental protection strategy designed to protect the Earth's resources.

sustainable development – An environmental strategy designed to protect natural resources.

T

tipping fees – The price paid to dispose of waste in a landfill.

tires – As used in recycling, passenger car and truck tires (excludes airplane, bus, motorcycle and special service military, agricultural, off-the-road and slow speed industrial tires). Car and truck tires are recycled into rubber products such as trash cans, storage containers, rubberized asphalt or used whole for playground and reef construction.

toxic – Capable of causing injury or death, by chemical means, poisonous.

transfer station – A facility where waste is removed from small collection vehicles and loaded onto larger transport vehicles or rail cars.

trash – Material considered worthless, unnecessary or offensive that is usually thrown away.

U

used motor oil – Motor oil that has been used in an engine and is considered to be waste. This oil can be recycled.

V

vermicomposting – The production of compost using worms to digest organic waste.

virgin materials – Any basic material for industrial processes that has not previously been used. Another term for raw materials. Examples include timber or metal ore.

volatile organic compounds (VOCs) – gases released by certain solids or liquids, some of which may have a negative short- and long-term impact on health.

W-X

warning – In hazardous household products labeling, warning means a

stronger risk than caution, use with added care.

waste – Anything which is discarded or not considered useful.

waste audit – A process that will provide data on how much and what kind of waste is generated, disposed of and recycled as well as identify opportunities to reduce waste and recycle.

waste reduction – An important waste management strategy that encourages people to generate less trash through practices such as reuse, recycling and buying products with less packaging.

waste stream – All waste generated in an area or a facility.

waste-to-energy facility: Facility where recovered municipal solid waste is converted into a usable form of energy, usually via combustion.

water table: The level of groundwater.

worm castings – Worm manure.

Y-Z

yard trimmings – Grass clippings, shrub prunings, leaves, tree branches and other discarded material from yards and gardens.