

FACT SHEET



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Preventing Open Dumping

Office of Land Quality
Solid Waste Compliance

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www.idem.IN.gov

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Introduction:

- Discarding trash or unwanted items anywhere except state permitted landfills, transfer stations, incinerators or recycling centers is considered open dumping and is illegal.
- Indiana environmental rules state: "No person shall cause or allow the storage, containment, processing or disposal of solid waste in a manner which creates a threat to human health or the environment, including the creating of a fire hazard, vector attraction, air or water pollution or other contamination."
- Typically, open dumps are located in secluded locations, such as woods or small ravines, but may also be found along the side of the road or streams.
- Examples of waste which is often dumped are household building debris, construction and demolition waste, household garbage, appliances, furniture, tires, plastic, cardboard and hazardous waste.

Potential Health and Environmental Impacts:

- Physical hazards at open dumps include broken glass, sharp metal on discarded items, and appliances in which children or animals can be trapped.
- Chemical hazards include toxic substances that can be especially hazardous for curious children. Household hazardous waste (HHW), such as paint, pesticides and other toxic chemicals, can be found in open dumps.
- Biological hazards, including syringes or other discarded medical items, mercury and asbestos.
 - Household garbage, which may include food scraps and dirty diapers, attracts vermin.
 - Discarded tires and other items can collect standing water and form the perfect breeding area for mosquitoes that could carry encephalitis or West Nile Virus.
 - Rainfall can carry chemicals and HHW into the water table and the local drinking water. In regulated landfills, plastic liners protect the water table.
- Aesthetic impact - Open dumping destroys Indiana's beautiful scenery.

How to Safely and Legally Dispose of Solid Waste From Your Home or Business:

- Solid waste from homes and businesses should be disposed of at a permitted landfill. If trash collection service or community dumpsters are not offered for residents in your community, you can find a county by county listing of permitted landfills and waste disposal sites on the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) website at www.IN.gov/idem/4850.htm#permitted.
- Many items such as glass, aluminum, steel, plastics, and paper can be separated from household trash for recycling. Find out about drop-off sites and curbside collections by calling your local solid waste district (see <http://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/pages/swmd/map.html> for a directory).
- Unwanted and broken electronics should not be put in the trash. Find out about e-waste recycling options in your area by visiting www.in.gov/idem/recycle/2377.htm.
- Many unwanted household items are reusable, including furniture, clothing, and used electronics. Before throwing away good used items, check with your local solid waste district for organizations that need and/or accept them.
- Keep yard waste out of the trash. Uncontaminated and untreated natural growth, including brush and limbs, can be used to make mulch. Leaves, grass clippings and sawdust can be composted. Check with your local solid waste district about local yard waste collection programs (see

<http://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/pages/swmd/map.html> for a listing) or find a list of registered yard waste composting facilities at http://www.in.gov/idem/files/reg_yard_waste_comp_fac.pdf. Or, consider backyard composting—for tips, visit www.IN.gov/recycle/5730.htm.

- Do not discard unwanted tires. Tire shops charge minimal fees to dispose of their customers' unwanted tires. Local solid waste districts hold special collections for residents. Contact your solid waste district for information (see <http://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/pages/swmd/map.html> for a directory).
- Asbestos must be managed properly, in accordance with federal and state air and solid waste regulations. IDEM's offices of Air Quality and Land Quality regulate various activities related to the removal and disposal of asbestos containing materials from commercial, industrial and institutional structures. Certain residential structures and home renovation projects may be exempt from IDEM requirements. However, IDEM advises homeowners to take precautions to avoid exposure and dispose of all waste at approved facilities. IDEM's fact sheet at http://www.in.gov/idem/files/factsheet_asbestos.pdf and website <http://www.in.gov/idem/airquality/2581.htm> offer more information.
- Appliances such as window air conditioners, motor vehicle air conditioners, and refrigerators may contain refrigerants such as Freon, which deplete the ozone layer and are potent greenhouse gases (GHGs). Pilot light sensors found in gas appliances such as stoves, furnaces, and water heaters may contain mercury. Proper handling and disposal is critical for reducing significant environmental harm. Residents who need help finding a recycler should contact their local solid waste management district for information (see <http://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/pages/swmd/map.html> for a listing). Recyclers can find guidance on U.S. EPA's website at <http://www2.epa.gov/rad>.

Consequences of Open Dumping:

Open dumping is a class D felony. Violators are responsible to pay for remediation and proper disposal of waste from the open dump site. Environmental damage to soil and water can be significant and irreversible. Unsightly waste piles spoil Indiana's landscape and can lower property values of surrounding homes.

What Citizens and Local Officials Can Do to Prevent Open Dumping:

Local governments and private citizens should report illegal open waste dumps, as well as any illegal open dumping activities, as soon as they are observed. Complaints may be directed to IDEM's Complaint Coordinator, toll free, at (800) 451-6027, ext. 2-4464, or www.in.gov/idem/5274.htm. Municipal and county law enforcement officials may work with county and state attorney offices to investigate and prosecute offenders. The publicizing of arrests and successful prosecutions may help to deter others from illegal dumping activities.

IDEM's Role:

IDEM is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while providing for safe industrial, agricultural, commercial and governmental operations vital to a prosperous economy. IDEM's Solid Waste Compliance Section oversees Indiana's solid waste facilities, septage haulers, and septage land application sites, and investigates illegal open dumps.

More Information:

- To report illegal open dumping in your neighborhood, contact IDEM's Complaint Coordinator, toll free, at (800) 451-6027, ext. 2-4464, or visit www.in.gov/idem/5274.htm to submit an online complaint or download a complaint form.
- For information about IDEM's Solid Waste Compliance program, including IDEM's *Open Dumping in Indiana* brochure, visit www.idem.IN.gov/6836.htm.
- For recycling information, visit IDEM's Recycle Indiana website at www.recycle.IN.gov.
- For guidance on asbestos, including additional links, see IDEM's Asbestos fact sheet at www.IN.gov/idem/files/factsheet_asbestos.pdf.
- For information about U.S. EPA's Responsible Appliance Disposal program, visit www2.epa.gov/rad.