

## **Fact Sheet**

### **B-2.5 Materials Waste Exchange: An Effective Waste Reduction Tool for Small Businesses**

A waste exchange can help businesses find a market or an end user for materials they no longer need. This exchange is a materials listing system based on the premise that one business' discards can be another business' feedstock. A low-cost method of solid waste management, waste exchange can be used effectively as a source reduction program. Waste exchanges enable businesses to use existing materials rather than virgin feedstock, conserving valuable resources and reducing landfilled wastes.

The most common type of waste exchange is actually an information exchange. Waste information exchanges do not handle the actual materials. Details about available or wanted waste and surplus materials are compiled into lists in the form of catalogs or on an electronic bulletin board service (BBS). Businesses contact one another directly to set up the actual exchange. If listings are confidential, then the waste exchange service acts as intermediary between the two parties. Some exchanges also provide information about waste management goods and services.

#### **The Advantages**

Waste exchanges are both cost effective and environmentally beneficial. The business generating the waste can avoid paying disposal costs, avoid shipping costs, and free up valuable storage space. The businesses receiving the materials use this less expensive feedstock and packaging by not having to buy new materials. Communities can extend the life of landfills, while also keeping hazardous chemicals out of waste. And, of course, the environment is improved by decreasing the use of raw materials.

Other benefits can result from using waste exchanges. Entrepreneurs can use them as a source of ideas and opportunities to start new businesses or product lines. Publicizing the use of exchanges can also help businesses improve their corporate image.

#### **Using a Waste Exchange Service**

Materials suitable for exchange include surplus equipment, unused supplies, and discontinued products. Typical materials listed in waste exchanges include:

Acids	Plastic & Rubber	Containers & Pallets
Alkalis	Textiles & Leather	Durables & Electronics
Other Inorganic Chemicals	Wood & Paper	Glass, Paint & Coatings
Solvents	Metal & Metal Sludge	Miscellaneous
Other Organic Chemicals	Lab Chemicals	
Oil & Wax	Construction Materials	

#### **Listing Materials**

It is easy to list materials with a waste exchange service. A form for listing materials is provided in most catalogs. Most exchanges allow confidential listing of materials. To list a material, the generator provides pertinent information like:

- ! Whether the material is available or needed;
- ! The type of material (acids, plastics, metals, etc.);
- ! Its physical state;
- ! The amount of material;
- ! How often the material is available or needed;
- ! How it is packaged;
- ! List any contaminants that may be present in the material;
- ! If it is a liquid, provide its chemical formula;
- ! Indicate the process that generated the material.

### **Responding To a Listing**

Businesses interested in materials that are listed confidentially first contact the waste exchange service that published the listing. The waste exchange then gives information about the interested business to the generator of the materials. The generator has the option to contact the responding business and negotiate any exchange. If the listing provides the name and address of the generator offering the materials, the business may contact the generator directly. The generator and the business desiring the material negotiate any exchange directly with each other.

### **The Wisconsin Example**

Several waste exchange options can be used by Wisconsin businesses. Wisconsin cooperates with the Industrial Materials Exchange Service (IMES) in Illinois which lists materials from Wisconsin businesses and shares listings with the National Materials Exchange Network (NMEN). There are also waste exchanges in Minnesota and Michigan that can be used. A service limited to businesses in eastern Wisconsin through Wisconsin Electric Power Company (WEPCO) is another option.

### **National Materials Exchange Network**

National Materials Exchange Network (NMEN) is a cooperative effort of 36 materials exchanges across North America. NMEN offers an on-line national database of materials containing more than 5,200 listings of materials available and wanted in 17 categories. The network's BBS is operated by the Pacific Materials Exchange (PME), a nonprofit corporation based in Spokane, Washington, through a grant from the U.S. EPA.

Both PME and NMEN accept listings from any company in any state. When listing with the local exchange, materials will also be listed with NMEN. NMEN lists materials available and needed including: waste by-products; off-spec, overstock, obsolete and damaged materials; and used and virgin solid and hazardous wastes. To list with NMEN, use a computer with a modem. Any business or Industry may list materials by calling 1-800/858-6625. The help line number is

509/325-0551.

### **Advantages of Using the National Materials Exchange Network**

Since NMEN operates as an electronic bulletin board service, it offers several advantages over other materials exchange services:

- ! No charge for the service.
- ! Access is available 24 hours a day.
- ! Listing exposure includes all of North America.
- ! All listings are current — no time lag like the period between when a catalog is printed and when it is distributed.
- ! Instant access to materials listings by modem rather than by periodic catalog.

### **Before you Ship Materials**

Department of Transportation (DOT) and Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) rules apply when shipping and handling industrial hazardous materials. For general questions about industrial hazardous material exchanges, contact waste reduction specialists at the nearest county extension service or state regulatory agency.