

Dealing with hazardous wastes

Safe disposal

Sound waste management depends on a number of factors – not the least being what to do with the material once it has been recovered.

This is particularly the case with hazardous wastes, especially those that are intractable. They can't go to the local landfill, and instead need to be stored in purpose-built, secure containment facilities before being sent outside of Taranaki for disposal, usually by being incinerated in specially designed and licensed facilities overseas.

...SLIGHTLY MORE THAN A DECADE AFTER THIS REGION INITIATED ITS EFFORT TO RID ITSELF OF HAZARDOUS WASTE, THE PROBLEM IS ALMOST NON-EXISTENT.

Today, everything that is collected in Taranaki is disposed of properly through accredited and technically sound methods of recycling or disposal. There are no

hazardous wastes stored indefinitely in any facility where there is ongoing potential for leakage or spillage.

This means that the only known hazardous wastes in Taranaki at any one time are those that have been received at the three district council drop-off centres at municipal waste transfer stations.

But what has happened to the hazardous wastes that have been collected in Taranaki? At one stage the Taranaki Regional Council held more than 10 tonnes of the wastes in secure storage in Taranaki. More than 50% of the material comprised organochlorines such as dieldrin and DDT, about 20% were other labelled chemicals, while the remainder were 'unknown' substances.

These have all now been removed from Taranaki – some even went overseas to special incineration facilities.

There's a small – but slowly declining – stream of such waste being delivered to the drop-off centres by Taranaki residents, which shows that slightly more



Intractable wastes being packaged at the collection site.

than a decade after this region initiated its effort to rid itself of hazardous waste, the problem is almost non-existent.

Obviously no-one will know with absolute certainty what waste remains – unless every last shed, cupboard, side room, and drum resting against a back fence in the region is inspected.

But consider this: in the first collection programme in the early 1990s, the proportion of organochlorines such as DDT was around 55%. In the 1999 collection, which featured a much higher participation rate and higher total volumes of wastes collected, the quantity of DDT and other persistent organic

pollutants was much less. In the most recent collection, the quantity of organochlorines was about 500 kg – just 3% of the total volume handled.

At the time of publication of this booklet, the Taranaki Regional Council was undertaking a survey of waste management issues and practices on farms across the region. Included in this survey were questions on the presence and quantities of unwanted or waste agricultural chemicals. It's early days yet, but initial results from this survey indicate that in a so-called 'worst case' scenario, there are maybe up to two tonnes of organochlorines remaining on Taranaki farms. This estimate confirms a Ministry for the Environment report prepared in 2004. In that report, based on various assumptions, an experienced hazardous wastes contractor estimated that up to 2.4 tonnes of organochlorines were remaining in Taranaki.

Compared to what the situation was not that long ago, that quantity isn't much. Of course there will always be more such waste discovered from time to time in the back of a shed somewhere, but thanks to the combined effort of many, Taranaki now has the facilities and the expertise to quickly, efficiently and safely dispose of it.



In recent collections the proportion of organochlorines such as DDT was reduced.



Sorted and labelled hazardous wastes ready for transport.

Disposing of hazardous wastes today

District councils provide facilities

In Taranaki, district and regional councils have combined forces to ensure the region remains clear of any threats posed by hazardous wastes. Each of the three district councils provides facilities for people to dispose of the small quantities of hazardous wastes that are still being discovered.

The drop-off points are at the municipal transfer stations at Colson Road in New Plymouth, Cordelia Street South in Stratford, and Scott Street in Hawera. These are all well-designed storage facilities that have been set up specifically for the efficient handling of any hazardous wastes. The storage areas are regularly cleared by specialised contractors.

Taranaki residents are encouraged to make use of these facilities rather than disposing of hazardous wastes with normal refuse in landfills or in other ways where they may contaminate the natural environment.

Local farmer John Stanway is typical of the residents of New Plymouth District that continue to make use of the drop-off facilities at the Colson Road Transfer Station.

Recently, when clearing out an old shed on his farm, John came across a mix of chemicals and waste. John was aware of the facility at the transfer station and decided that the safest option was to contact New Plymouth District Council Waste Officer Mike Baker and take all of the waste to the collection facility for sorting and safe disposal.

For advice on the correct disposal of hazardous wastes people should contact their district council Waste Officer at:

New Plymouth District Council 06 759 6060
Stratford District Council 06 765 6099
South Taranaki District Council 06 278 0555



Mike Baker, NPDC (left) and John Stanway (right) sort hazardous wastes at the permanent collection facility at New Plymouth.

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Published by the Taranaki Regional Council with the
support of the Ministry for the Environment.

December 2004.

ISBN 0-476-01170-1



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

