

## RECYCLING AND WASTE-TO-ENERGY: ONGOING COMPATIBILITY SUCCESS

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More than ten years after the first investigation documenting waste-to-energy's compatibility with recycling, a new comprehensive survey definitively demonstrates that the two waste management options work well together. Communities with waste-to-energy facilities across the country responded enthusiastically in favor of combining recycling with waste-to-energy for the management of household trash. The 2002 survey confirmed not only that recycling and waste-to-energy are compatible, but also provided solid reasons why the two technologies perform better together than separately.<sup>1</sup> Key findings include:

- All waste-to-energy plants in the U. S. are linked to off-site recycling programs.
- On-site waste-to-energy recycling, in the form of ferrous and nonferrous metals recovery, ash reuse, and other materials recovery, is occurring at 82 percent of U.S. facilities.
- Fifty-seven percent of the responding waste-to-energy communities have recycling rates greater than the national average of 28 percent. The average recycling rate for waste-to-energy communities across the U. S. is 33 percent.
- All recycling coordinators, municipal officials, and waste management professionals responding to the

compatibility portion of the investigation provided evidence regarding why they believe recycling and waste-to-energy are compatible.

### Survey Methodology

Waste-to-energy communities were contacted by email and telephone to discuss the compatibility issue. Off-site recycling data pertaining to waste-to-energy community recycling rates were obtained for 98 operating facilities (i.e., not including RDF processing operations). Data pertaining to on-site recovery of materials for recycling were collected for all 105 U. S. facilities, including refuse derived fuel (RDF) processing operations that do not combust trash, but generate only RDF fuel. More detailed data relating to the type of off-site recycling materials and programs, plus the compatibility question, were obtained for 64 waste-to-energy operations. More detailed interviews were conducted with public officials in seven communities.

### Off-Site Recycling

All 98 communities with operating waste-to-energy plants are linked to off-site recycling programs. The recycling operations associated with these programs may be public or private, residential or commercial. The programs may also operate outside of the community in which the plant is specifically located. The type of recycling programs noted by the 64 waste-to-energy communities who provided actual details is shown in Table 1. The type of materials linked to these programs is also provided. Other programs and related materials include: compost and mulch operations, artificial reef construction, household hazardous waste management, mercury reduction efforts, battery recycling, used oil management,

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<sup>1</sup> The compatibility survey, conducted as part of the investigation to compile the Integrated Waste Services Association Directory of Waste-to-Energy Facilities, was conducted between April and September 2002. For a copy of the Facility Directory, contact IWSA at (202) 467-6240, or e-mail [Zanneswte@aol.com](mailto:Zanneswte@aol.com).