

Collection Programs: Coming to a Village Near You...

Collection programs are coming to a village near you! That's great news because a 2001 study found that residents who simply visited their village dump were **2 to 3.7 times more**



likely to experience faintness, fever, vomiting, stomach pain, ear and eye irritation, headache, and/or numbness symptoms than people who didn't visit the

dump. Collection programs keep folks away so there is no exposure to contaminants, disease vectors, and dump safety issues. And no exposure means no risks. **The dump itself benefits because it automatically becomes more organized.** Only the operator/collector discards wastes and they can do that in a designed, "best practices" manner. And residents don't end up lighting their own waste fires. That is a huge health advantage, because you can then keep burnbox smoke to night hours and favorable wind days. There are



many other benefits as well - including **lower dumpsite operation costs, a smaller dump "footprint" that impacts a smaller part of your land, and better waste separation and recycling potential.**

What types of collection programs are there?

For equipment, folks use regular Flatbeds and pickup trucks for trash pickup, to specialized cart trailers and dumpster trucks. For methods, villages are using door-to-door as well as shared containers. And for fees, households are being charged anywhere from \$0 to over \$30 per month. We summarize some of these programs below.

Transfer Stations - What are they?

A transfer station is a place that accepts community wastes. The wastes are then hauled to the landfill. In the Lower-48, a station might be a building or a fenced raised platform to unload trash into dumpsters or vans. Recycling

drop-off or hazardous waste separation is usually offered there too. Many villages are applying the concept of a transfer station to their smaller communities. They place shared waste containers around town so folks discard their garbage there. That way, folks don't go to the dump. The containers are like "mini-transfer stations". There are two types. With *Mobile* transfer stations, the containers are hauled to the landfill. And with *Stationary* transfer stations, the containers are emptied into a transport vehicle first. Then that vehicle drives to the dump.



Mobile Transfer Station

Examples

Chignik Bay has a long running program that works well for them. They have 3 dumpsters, custom-made from Bob's Services in Anchorage (www.bobsservices.com). See photo on the left. These dumpsters (i.e. "transfer stations") are placed at the busiest places around town. They are attached with a hook and hauled with a truck to the dump. The dumpsters open at back



for unloading, *and have built-in steps and doors on the side for easy access.* Household fees are \$37/ mo, and it is \$1,200/ mo for the cannery. Fees are added to the water/sewer bill. If

houses don't pay, a meterbox is installed and they must pre-pay on the card for all city services.

Napakiak and Akiachak are communities that use Tag-A-Long trailers (www.Tagalongak.com) for mini-transfer stations. These Trailers are

enclosed cages that can be used either as stationary dumpsters or collection carts. Wheels can be changed out for skis in winter. In these communities the trailers are placed around town for residents' use. The collector hooks the full trailer up to an ATV, drives it to the dump and brings the empty trailer to the next station. Then the full trailer there is taken to the dump, emptied, and brought to the next station, etc. *The advantage of having a fully enclosed trailer cart is that more trash can be piled into the cart and hauled per load. And litter doesn't fly out.* The trailers are collected twice per week, and the system works well for them, although they need more trailers.

Tetlin - Tetlin's landfill is not presenting many issues, but their problem is with moose, dogs, and



bears getting into their town garbage. So they recently began using Tag-A-Long trailers as well. *They don't have many trailers, so they located them closest to Elder's homes as their placement strategy.* Like many villages,

they don't have a way to pay a collector yet. Instead of waiting until they can convince the community to pay, they are trying to *use volunteers to drive the trailers to the dump.* They are also considering employing GA recipients to work as an exchange. For example, GA recipients in Fort Yukon staff their Recycling Center to work for benefits and contribute a valuable community service.

Stationary Mini-Transfer Stations

Eek. Eek worked with UAF Cooperative Extension to study their traditional drinking water and how bacteria could be transported from the dump to town. The results spurred the community to start a collection program. They began using tipping dumpster bins and a fitted trailer system from Summit Consulting Services (www.scsalaska.com). However, this system didn't work well for Eek's conditions and usage. They now use these bins in-place and then employ an ATV and open cart to transfer the trash to the dump. *They still collect from Elder's homes, as well as some others who need it.* The

collection program has made a big difference at their dump. All the birds that used to fly from the dump to town and land on household roofs are gone. Because most residents use untreated roof rainwater for drinking, their water supply is much better protected. *Residents don't burn at the dump anymore. So Eek can now operate their burnbox during favorable winds*



- keeping harmful ash away from roofs and residents' noses. They have not started a user fee yet. But the IGAP Dept has been working hard on educating the community and it is working. The City has a waste separation ordinance and

they will soon be in a position to begin user fees to help sustain the operation. Eek IGAP's advice in reaching the community is to focus on health.

Togiak The City of Togiak has several dumpsters that hook and lift into a rear loading garbage truck. About 5 - 10 households share each of the 20-30 dumpsters around town. Fees are \$10/mo. Not everyone pays primarily because they see that they can use the dumpsters for free. The dumpsters used to have plastic covers to keep trash contained, but the latches broke and there is a lot of wind-blown litter now. Togiak recommends checking the quality of the covers. *Another problem is that they don't have an easy way to separate wastes because they don't have separate bins.* And wastes are emptied straight into the landfill burncage so it is difficult for the operator to go through them there. Bigger businesses have their own dumpsters and pay about \$100 per dumpster, with smaller businesses paying



\$40/month, and lodges paying \$150 per boatload. The transfer station program has helped a lot. Folks only go to the dump now to salvage at the salvage area. There used to be burning in drums throughout town, but now because residents don't need to haul their trash, they are happy to not burn.

Door-to-Door Collection

Some communities service households by going door-to-door. This is called a "household collection program". With this program, you can have "mandatory collection", where everyone must use the

service. Or you can have “voluntary collection”, where only people that want the service participate. Usually, voluntary service is a pay service. The advantage of mandatory service is that you can keep the entire community away from the dump. The disadvantage is that if you charge for the service, it is hard to collect fees from everyone. A lot of villages have this problem.

St Mary’s The city operates a household collection program 2 times/week. They have been operating the program successfully for 12 years. They have what is called “source separation”. That means wastes are separated by the households before collection or self-hauling. The city brings the truck by once per week for burnable trash,



Bins were labeled by the kids.

and once per week for non-burnable trash. They have a driver plus a collector who picks the trash up and crushes it before going to the next house. *St Mary’s has on-call workers as a backup so that garbage doesn’t accumulate in town when their regular workers are gone.* Businesses pay \$1,200 annually, and houses pay \$10/month in their sewer bill. Folks there see the program as a big improvement. Before there was trash everywhere. Before, the City tried to control the dump by having open hours. But folks would just throw their trash

outside when dump was closed

Toksook Bay IGAP has been working hard with several entities to obtain a door-to-door system that suits their community, and it has finally paid off. They received funds from an ANTHC-RurALCap Environmental Demonstration grant to purchase 3 collection bins for each household to do source separation. Each house will separate trash into burnables, non-burnables, and hazardous waste. To make it easier, the bins are color coded according to the trash type. Then Coastal Village Services helped them purchase a Tag-A-Long Trailer that can use both wheels and skis. And The Alaska Legislature gave funds for a burnbox and dump cleanup so that there would

be space at their dump for the collected wastes. Finally, City funds will hire the collectors. They don’t have a fee yet, but IGAP has been working with City Council to let them know a fee will be needed. Because of the long and hard effort, the community is really interested in the bins and IGAP receives many calls wanting to know when they’ll be distributed. Unfortunately, no



one wants to pay a fee. To help spur interest, IGAP has the kids come in and put labels and pictures on all the bins to designate what goes in them. *The advice of IGAP in starting a collection program is to have patience.* Everything doesn’t work out as planned but it will

fall into place. One of the most important and effective ways to get the community involved is to do outreach.

Elim also started an ATV household collection program using an ANTHC/RurAL CAP community Environmental Demonstration grant. They purchased an ATV and used a resident’s open wagon. To start interest, they began with a free month of collection for everyone, which



included separated recyclables (see picture). They had 34 houses sign-up, but most dropped out when the \$10/month fee began. That did not give them enough money to operate the program

for anyone. They are now looking for funds to help pay the collector’s salary. They feel *one month’s time to get used to the program was not enough and recommend planning for a lot of education* if you want to charge enough to pay for the operator and fuel.

Yakutat Yakutat is one of a few communities that has a private waste collector. He charges \$52/mo to haul in his own pickup truck. *Relying on private haulers is nice because you don’t need to furnish the equipment.* But you also don’t have the control you might otherwise have and you don’t get the revenue. Lower-48 cities often contract private haulers as a way to have control over the operation – but to still avoid the operational

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costs. An ordinance that spells out rules for private garbage services is possible as well. The City is looking into moving towards a flat mandatory fee with its water/sewer bill for landfill use, in order to continue to have a clean and well-managed landfill.

Koyuk has had a collection program operated by the City for over 10 years. They don't have many problems and people don't really visit the dump anymore. They use a 350 Ford Truck Flatbed as a collection vehicle and go door-to-door to collect twice per week. This takes two operators 4 hours per day. They charge \$25.50 for houses and \$81.60 for businesses. Unlike several villages that include the fees in water and sewer, Koyuk sends out a separate bill for solid waste. They have fairly good rates of payment, but not perfect. *To keep folks away from the dump, they still collect wastes from those households.*

Mekoryuk To address the problem of residents not paying, *Mekoryuk has a voluntary system where residents pre-pay* at the Tribal Office \$15/mo for houses and \$30/mo for businesses. Mekoryuk has an ATV and Cage-trailer system and the collector drives door-to-door for paying customers. This system works well in terms of logistics, but the participation is low – with just a handful of users in the summer. IGAP is still in the early stages of developing and they hope to educate the community more with handouts from



This collection vehicle will pull an open metal cart for household trash bags

<http://zendergroup.org/viewdocs.htm>.

Chefornak also uses a Tag-A-Long Trailer for door-to-door collection. They have been operating longer and have a slightly better participation rate. *When they switched from an open cart to closed cage trailer, the operator had to make only about half the number of trips to the dump.* He was able to pile and cram in almost twice as many garbage bags!

Transfer Station and Household Collection

Pedro Bay built a single main transfer station that is similar to a Lower-48 facility. It is not just a dumpster, but a facility with an incinerator and baler. The voluntary program they are planning is termed a "Pay As You Throw" Program. That means folks pay based on the amount of trash they have. In Pedro Bay, they are thinking \$5 for 2 big black/green garbage bags, \$3 for 2 kitchen-size bags, and \$1 per additional bag. *If wastes are separated they might get collection for free.* Businesses would pay the same as houses. Folks would call



when they needed collection. The community has heard the idea and is okay with trying it. *For people who don't want the collection program, IGAP put in an access door at their facility to drop off trash in a designated box.* This way, folks are still kept away from the dump, and even self-haulers can be protected.

Igiugig also has something similar to a regular transfer station setup. Folks take their trash and recyclables to a central recycling center where there is a trash trailer, recycling bins, a glass crusher, and baler. The trailer is driven to the landfill. The landfill is always locked and no one is allowed in except the operator. *Igiugig uses interns to collect trash from elder's homes.* They charge everyone a \$10 monthly fee that is a line item on the utility bill. *As an incentive, folks who participate in community cleanup get half off their fee, and everyone pays.* To help pay for the landfill and pay a fair share, Lodges are charged significantly more.

User Fees

There seem to be two main reasons why villages don't have programs. First, it is difficult to get the community to pay fees to pay for the program. Second, folks don't know where to begin. This article gave you some ideas on user fee rates and structures and incentives. But next newsletter we will explore in more detail the different ways to get residents to pay and resources for setting user fees.

Collection Program Resources

For an education factsheet that you can share with Council and community on the benefits of starting

a collection program, go to: <http://www.zendergroup.org/docs/collection.pdf> . To read more details on the village examples we list here, go to: http://www.zendergroup.org/docs/Collection_Use_rFee_Examples.pdf . That page lists the village contacts, all of whom graciously shared their stories and gave approval to print their contact information. They've invited you to ask them more questions about their system and lessons learned.

Finally, we've just completed three factsheets that give you information on funding, buying, or making collection equipment. Go here: http://www.zendergroup.org/docs/collection_carts.pdf for collection cart/small trailer information, go here: <http://www.zendergroup.org/dumpster.html> for dumpster and truck information, and here: http://www.zendergroup.org/docs/Recycling_bins.pdf for recycling bin information. Again, we highly recommend talking to other villages and to call different vendors and explore the options you have.