

## Making Your Dump Safer For You And Your Community: *An Operator's Workbook*



Dump drawing, Rene'e Avugiak April, 2001

## Introduction:

This workbook is for people who work with their community dump sites out in rural Alaska. There are a lot of open dumps out there, and not a lot of money to fix them. If you are still waiting for "the check in the mail" to clean up or close your dump site, this book is for you. It contains a lot of practical and cheap tips to make your dump safer *now*. Once you have marked off all of the tips, you can sit back and relax. You will have made your dump much safer for you and your community. And we bet that check will still be in the mail.

### 1. Safety Gear: Start gathering safety gear to wear when you are out at the dump.

- \_\_\_ Respirator mask (if burning or when there is a possibility of toxic chemicals)
- \_\_\_ Tyvek suit (for walking on piled up wastes if you have to )
- \_\_\_ Steel-toed boots (all the time)
- \_\_\_ Ear plugs (if using heavy equipment)
- \_\_\_ Eye protection (if working with batteries or liquid hazardous wastes)
- \_\_\_ Leather gloves and rubber liner gloves (if handling wastes or batteries)
- \_\_\_ Hardhat (if walking through unstable wastes)
- \_\_\_ Medical kit (have one handy all the time)



### 2. Avoiding Germs: This is very important, especially if you have honeybucket disposal.

- \_\_\_ Use a hand sanitizer every time you leave the dump or eat food at the dump.
- \_\_\_ Use a set of clothes and shoes only for the dump. Change before you go home.
- \_\_\_ If you wear your shoes outside the dump, step in a tray of bleach and water after you leave the dump. Use 1 part bleach to 4 parts of water. You only need enough to cover the bottom of the tray. Change the solution each week.



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**3. Safety Practices:** Dumps are dangerous places!





- \_\_\_ Wear steel-toed boots when working at the dump site.
- \_\_\_ Look for hazardous wastes or unstable spots, and mark them with a flagged post.
- \_\_\_ If you break your skin with a cut or puncture go to the clinic to clean it.
- \_\_\_ Go to the clinic and make sure you are up-to-date with your tetanus shot.

**4. Dump Management:** You can work on these one at a time.

- \_\_\_ Make sure the access is clear so that people don't need to step on *any* wastes.
- \_\_\_ Rope or tape off extra access paths so people don't use them. This will also help to get plants to start growing again. 
- \_\_\_ Avoid destroying any wetland or tundra areas as much as possible when working. Plants are very good at cleaning pollution. The more plants, the better. 
- \_\_\_ Organize the dump. Try to create separate areas with separate safe paths for salvageable wastes. That way people can "shop" there without health risk.
- \_\_\_ If you have honeybucket disposal at or near your site, make sure that honeybuckets are being discarded in just one marked location.

**5. Practical Steps:** These are some quick and easy steps to do.

- \_\_\_ Buy a tarp and use it to cover the new wastes. Weigh it down with some scrap metal.
- \_\_\_ If you don't have a storage shed, use a tarp to cover and store batteries, as well as other  hazardous wastes or hazardous materials, like drums of used oil.
- \_\_\_ Look for wood, plastic, or cardboard and use it to place over ruts and low spots on the access path. This will reduce erosion, help the plants grow, and prevent people from walking in contaminated water.
- \_\_\_ Look out for slippery spots and find something to make it less slippery-- especially for honeybucket drop-off points. Use a doormat, sand, old rubber, or rug from the dump.
- \_\_\_ Mark off with tape or rope the areas that people should not enter. You can also mark off areas that you *want* people to use. 
- \_\_\_ Try out a pan of bleach solution for people to walk through after visiting the dump. You can always make it available and they can decide whether they want to use it.

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**5. Practical Steps continued:**

- \_\_\_ Find something to use as a post and place it along the main access path to the dump. Tack up notes to the community about different activities such as: Where to dump so the site expands in the best direction and place, when burning is going to take place, what areas to stay away from, or what salvageable materials are there that people might want to use.  

- \_\_\_ At this post, place a bottle of hand sanitizer for people to use when they leave the dump!
- \_\_\_ Go to the clinic and make sure you set up a specific way for them to dump their clinic wastes. Their needles probably go to a hub city (but ask!). But wastes like Band-Aids and gauze are hazardous and should be burned immediately either at the clinic or at the dump (in a barrel).  

- \_\_\_ Go find the water operator (if you have one). The water operator can help you test the standing water at your dump for some types of pollution. You can also take water samples at places you are concerned about. It will be good to know what water is contaminated, so you can tell people not to drink from there. You can test for all kinds of pollution if you get some money. Work with your IGAP person to figure out a way of doing this.

**6. Community Actions To Get Started On:**

- \_\_\_ Start a battery backhaul program. See the battery recycling fact sheet.  

- \_\_\_ Get people and projects to use propylene glycol instead of ethylene glycol. Propylene glycol is much less dangerous to the environment and people.
- \_\_\_ Start a waste collection program. It will definitely make it easier to keep the dump safe!
- \_\_\_ Start a recycling program.  Try aluminum cans first.
- \_\_\_ Start a program to reduce or ban plastic bags. Or get people to use them and not throw them out.
- \_\_\_ Work with the Council to get a construction waste rule. Most projects should either pay for dumping their wastes or fly their wastes out. If you don't want them to pay, that is okay too. But they should dump all their wastes in one spot, separate from other wastes.

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7. **Community Education Steps:** You have an important job. You help protect the health and environment of your community. You know better than anyone what is going on at the dump and what people need to do to stay safe.

\_\_\_ If you have a used oil burner, tell everybody to start using it.



\_\_\_ If kids play at your dump, tell them not to. Or make sure their families tell them.

\_\_\_ Use that message post to tell people what they should know.

\_\_\_ Make sure that people know not to burn at the dump. If they feel it should be burned, they should tell you so it can be planned.

\_\_\_ If the dump is going to be burned, make sure everyone knows. Figure out which elders and children live in homes that are in the way of the smoke. Make sure they know. If the wind starts blowing towards the homes, go tell elders and children to stay inside or go to a place out of the smoke. Tell people who use traditional sources of water when you are going to burn. If the smoke goes over water sources, some of the ash can settle there. They need to wait a day after the smoke goes away to take more water.



8. **Waste management steps:** Start keeping track of how much waste you are getting and from who. This is the best way to work up to a fee system so that you can be paid more!

\_\_\_ Rope off a section of the dump and get people to dump only in that spot for one week. Then you can measure how much is there and how much space one week of trash takes up. That gives you an idea of how fast the dump edge is expanding. It also tells you about the types of wastes you are dealing with. For example, if there is a lot of cardboard then you know you can save a lot of space by finding a way to use it or burn it.

\_\_\_ Get construction projects to dump their wastes in one area. Measure that amount of waste and write down what was dumped. You might be able to recover some costs later.



\_\_\_ Try out some ways to keep track of waste dumping. You could have people mark off on a message board every time they visit. That way you will know how many people you need to educate about safe practices.

\_\_\_ Try to set certain hours for people to come so that you are there when they drop off wastes. If you don't have a gate or fence it might be hard. But if you can get most people to dump their garbage when you want them to and where you want them to, you will be making the dump safer.

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**9. Dump design:** Okay - here is where you become a dump design expert!

After you know about how much land you need and how fast it gets taken up, you can start to really plan how your dump grows. Remember to take into account whether your wastes get burned or not. Wastes take up a lot less space after they are burned. When you figure out the best way for your dump to grow, you can use the message board and rope off sections and pathways to let people know where they should be dumping. It will probably be good to ask some elders for their help in evaluating how the land is shaped and how water flows. Here are some things to look for:

\_\_\_ Do you have water flowing through the dump to the ground or surface water? Look at how your dump drains when water is there. Does the water drain through lots of plants before it gets to important subsistence streams? It should.



\_\_\_ Is the dump edge expanding towards important subsistence streams or near to homes? Can you re-set an access path or rope off sections of the dump so that it expands away from subsistence areas and homes?

\_\_\_ Construction wastes like wood and tile and flooring are usually pretty safe for water to go through. So if water flows through part of the dump and not through other parts, try to get the construction wastes dumped where most of the water is. Make sure that the construction wastes do not include antifreeze, paints, etc.



\_\_\_ If you have a limited amount of space at your dump that does not flood, use that space for your hazardous wastes like batteries, used oil, antifreeze, and honeybucket wastes.

\_\_\_ Remember berry gathering and waterfowl nesting spots. Make sure that the dump expands away from these areas too.

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