

4. POLICY POSITION

ESTABLISHMENT OF SOUTHEASTERN HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT ROUNDTABLE

Background

The proper management of hazardous waste is an increasingly critical problem facing government, the business community, and the public at large. The situation is of particular importance to the South, in view of its expanding industrial base and already large waste generation rates. It has been very difficult to make the prudent decisions that need to be made to safely handle hazardous waste; the decisions are technically complex, the regulations are complicated, and the issues involve substantial health, environmental, political, and economic risks. These risks can and must be managed.

In order to achieve a broader consensus for action, EPA Region IV and TVA established the Southeastern Hazardous Waste Management Roundtable to identify key hazardous waste management issues and to develop action plans to overcome the critical obstacles in those areas. The Roundtable includes representatives from states, industry, public interest groups and federal agencies with an interest in the South.

The Roundtable has identified three key areas for action: public education, waste minimization, and SARA compliance. These issues extend throughout the range of all hazardous waste management decisions, and their resolution will greatly enhance the potential for real progress to be achieved and maintained.

Recommendation

- A. Public Education - Public policy succeeds or fails because of public acceptance. In order to effectively participate in an informed decision-making process, an aggressive program of public education and information dissemination is necessary.
 1. The Southern Legislative Conference calls upon EPA to fund immediately the development and implementation of a regional plan for public education and information dissemination, targeting the following specific groups: waste generators, elected officials, regulators, environmental advocacy groups, educators, and the lay public. The plan should provide for the development of further information, computer interactive videos, training, curricula, etc., as necessary.

- B. Waste Minimization - Any action taken to avoid or reduce the amount of hazardous waste generated enhances the region's ability to safely manage its hazardous waste. Incentives must be provided so that generators accept waste minimization on a day-to-day basis.
1. The Southern Legislative Conference endorses waste minimization as a primary means of hazardous waste management. It seeks opportunities to confer with business and political leadership to demonstrate the benefits of waste minimization.
 2. The Southern Legislative Conference supports the institutionalization of waste minimization through the development of appropriate policies, regulations, legislation and by calling upon EPA to provide greater program funding for waste minimization efforts.
 3. The Southern Legislative Conference endorses Roundtable plans to implement a pilot waste minimization demonstration package in cooperation with targeted small business groups. The pilot program includes direct consultation with generator groups, as well as the establishment of a waste minimization information clearinghouse.
- C. SARA Compliance - The Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act of 1986 requires states to demonstrate they have adequate capacity to treat and dispose all of the hazardous waste reasonably expected to be generated within their boundaries in the next twenty years. This requirement forces facility siting decisions.
1. The Southern Legislative Conference endorses a regional approach for compliance with SARA. This strategy balances risks, increases public acceptance and provides for economic growth.
 2. The Southern Legislative Conference supports the Roundtable's efforts in obtaining background information, establishing criteria, conducting discussions, and facilitating multilateral agreements for regional hazardous waste management strategies.
 3. The Southern Legislative Conference calls for a thorough economic evaluation of regional hazardous waste management.

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Furthermore, the Southern Legislative Conference urges both EPA and TVA to work closely with The Council of State Governments, the parent organization of both SLC and the Southern Governors' Association (SGA), in coordinating future activities of the Southeastern Roundtable in cooperation with the Southern States Energy Board (SSEB) and the Southern Growth Policies Board (SGPB).