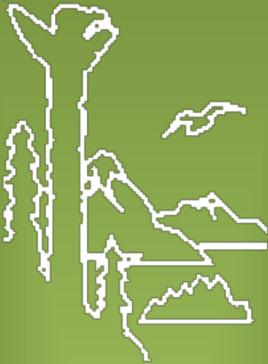


Tips for Solid Waste Management in Rural Alaska

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Solid Waste Program

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There are many challenges to managing solid waste in rural Alaska, but effective waste management can be done. Management options include burning, burying, and recycling. Not all options are available in all locations, but here are some suggestions for properly managing waste using each option.

Burning Waste

Burning is an effective way to reduce the volume of waste that goes into the landfill and to minimize the attraction of animals to the waste. However, those benefits come with some risk, so burning must be done carefully and thoughtfully. Firefighting equipment should be on hand, and the fire should be attended at all times until completely extinguished.

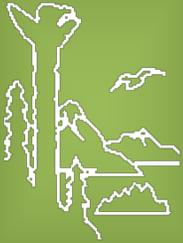
Since not all wastes should be burned, burnable wastes should be separated from non-burnable waste before burning begins. (This may be most easily done in the home.) Also, waste should be burned in a burn barrel, burn box, or burn cage rather than on the ground. The ashes must be completely cooled before they are put into the landfill. Waste that can be burned include cardboard, paper, food scraps, and wood.

Burying Waste

The following wastes should not be burned and should be covered as soon as is practical after disposal in the landfill:

- **Plastic** – Plastic should never be burned as it causes toxic smoke which is harmful to people and the environment.
- **Plastic Bags** – Plastic grocery bags are easily blown by wind, and often become a nuisance to the environment and wildlife. To avoid this, some people tie their empty bags in a knot before throwing them in the trash. Alternatively, some communities have banned the use of plastic grocery bags.
- **Abandoned cars, snowmachines, and 4-wheelers** – These items can be disposed in the landfill, but only after all fluids are drained out and the batteries are removed. Alternatively, some barge services and airline freight haulers may backhaul vehicles. See the “Recycling” section below for suggestions on handling the fluids and batteries.





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- **White Goods** – White goods are appliances such as washing machines, refrigerators, and freezers. These can all be buried at the landfill, but refrigerators, freezers, and air conditioners must have the Freon removed by a certified technician prior to burying them. If possible, old appliances should be crushed before they are buried to reduce their size and volume.
- **Animal carcasses** – Dead fish, animals, or animal parts should be handled carefully to prevent animal-borne disease. Carcasses can be disposed of at the landfill. All animal waste should be covered with hydrated lime and covered with at least 12 inches of soil within 24 hours. During fishing season, some communities create a special pit that is limed and covered every day.

Recycling

Recycling is the preferred waste management option whenever possible. In rural Alaska, recycling generally involves backhauling the waste to a larger community. Recyclable wastes include the following:

- **Aluminum Cans** – Almost every community has a can collection program and is taking advantage of the Alaskans for Litter Prevention and Recycling (ALPAR) program, which helps communities fly their aluminum cans to Anchorage for recycling.
- **Batteries** – Automobile, boat, snowmachine, and 4-wheeler batteries should be collected in shipping containers, plastic totes, or storage sheds prior to being shipped to a larger community for recycling.
- **Electronic Waste** – Televisions, computers, and other electronic equipment contain toxic material, such as lead, cadmium, and mercury.
- **Used Oil** – Many communities have used oil burners that can be used to heat buildings. Setting up a central collection point is a good way to simplify the collection process. If the used oil becomes contaminated by anti-freeze or other chemicals, it cannot be used in waste oil burners. Any used oil that cannot be burned or otherwise used in the community must be shipped out of the community for disposal in a permitted hazardous waste landfill.

Household Hazardous Wastes (HHW)

HHW includes cleaners, paints, insect sprays, and other chemicals that are hazardous but are specifically exempted from regulation as hazardous waste. Although HHW can be disposed in a municipal landfill, the ADEC recommends against this if an alternative to landfill disposal exists in your community. Such alternatives include HHW collection programs and backhaul opportunities. More information on HHW collection and disposal is available in the *Household Hazardous Waste Collection* factsheet on the Solid Waste Program website.

