

REUSE IN CONTEXT: *DELIVERING THE WASTE HIERARCHY*

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ABSTRACT: Waste management has changed significantly in some parts of the world since the introduction of the waste hierarchy and stayed broadly the same in others. In some parts of the EU, the waste industry has become progressively more sophisticated and technological and wastes are increasingly regarded as valuable resources to be utilised and exploited commercially rather than dumped and forgotten. This relatively recent change of emphasis reflects society's desire to secure and manage resources in a more sustainable fashion and to protect the environment, locally as well as globally. This workshop will explore what society and the waste sector will need to do if the waste hierarchy's original objectives are to be universally achieved.

Keywords: waste hierarchy; waste avoidance; waste prevention; reuse; strategy; decision-making

1. INTRODUCTION

The year 1975 was a good one for debuts. "Wonder Woman", "Wheel of Fortune", "Fawlty Towers", "Thalassa", "G-Men '75" and "Saturday Night Live" all appeared on television for the first time. Films such as "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," "Jaws" and "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" achieved box-office success. Bill Gates and Paul Allen founded Microsoft. The Bay City Rollers' first Number One single, "Bye, Bye, Baby," spent 6 weeks topping the UK charts in 1975, as did Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." Margaret Thatcher became the first female leader of any political party in the UK. Cape Verde gained independence after 500 years of Portuguese rule. Lyme disease - the most common disease spread by ticks in the Northern Hemisphere - was first diagnosed. The first "monster truck" (Bigfoot) was created. Natalie Imbruglia, Eva Longoria, will.i.am, Takayoshi Tanimoto, Olga Kern, David Beckham, Angelina Jolie, Shilpa Shetty, 50 Cent, Kate Winslet and Tiger Woods were born. And - perhaps most significantly - the European Union's Waste Framework Directive (Council Directive 75/442/EEC) introduced the waste hierarchy into European waste policy for the first time.

The waste hierarchy is a process that indicates an order of preference for action to reduce and manage waste. The aims of the waste hierarchy are to protect the environment, conserve resources and to minimise the amount of waste generated. It is often presented diagrammatically in the form of a pyramid, although several marginally different versions are in use. The waste hierarchy guides the progression of a material or product through successive stages of waste management treatments, and represents the latter part of the life-cycle for a material/product. The hierarchy gives top priority to preventing waste; when waste is generated, it gives precedence to direct re-use, recycling, recovery methods, such as energy recovery, and last of all disposal.

2. THE *DELIVERING THE WASTE HIERARCHY* WORKSHOP

2.1 Aims and focus of the workshop

It is a complex and demanding task to apply the waste hierarchy to a country's waste management practices. This workshop will focus on the following issues:

- Decision-making regarding the development and implementation of a waste management strategy that could practically and successfully deliver the waste hierarchy;
- How we could move towards a sustainable society that facilitates waste avoidance and prevention without harming economic development;
- The establishment of suitable collection and sorting systems for different streams of re/usable materials and products;
- The establishment of systems for data collection and monitoring, enforcement and control of legal frameworks that support delivery of the waste hierarchy;
- The development of human resources at all levels to manage the administrative, financial, information and technical systems put in place.

The aim of the workshop is to explore these issues through participatory discussion. The workshop format for this session offers opportunities for participants to discuss these key areas on the basis of their own experience, insight and expertise, and to share and debate these with other participants.

2.2 Workshop content, structure and delivery

A short introductory presentation will be provided to set out the context and purpose of the workshop to participants. Participants will be divided into groups of *ca.* four individuals to discuss these key issues and given a set period of time to do so. In a subsequent plenary session, the discussion will draw together all the workshop participants as a means to compare and contrast the outcomes of the group discussion, seeking to identify areas of commonality and/or differentiation. Each group will be asked to elect a *rapporteur* to present a short summary of their discussion. Opportunities to discuss the collective view and outcomes will follow, terminating with a summary and round-up delivered by the workshop leader. The workshop will be approximately 60 minutes in duration, including the introductory overview, and be suitable for 12 to 24 participants.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP

Through exploration of the key issues to hand (within small groups and in the plenary session), the participants will (1) have opportunity to reflect upon and present their own insight, experience and/or expertise, and (2) be able to compare and contrast their own perceptions to those of others. The expectation is that the contributions thus collected will permit evaluation of a wide range of possible outcomes, and, if identified, a consensus view. It is anticipated that the outcomes of the workshop will be written up as a multi-authored thought-provoking article for a suitable journal.