Waste Tire Collection in Wisconsin
A Brief Overview of Management Options

Management of used tires has long been an issue facing communities in Wisconsin. Historically, tires are among the most common items illegally dumped or they accumulate over time into large stockpiles. Legislation banned waste tires from Wisconsin landfills in 1995. Additional legislation provided a means for cleaning up most of the stockpiles throughout the state. A 2000 study by Franklin and Associates estimated there are nearly 100,000 tons of waste tires generated in Wisconsin each year.

What happens to all these waste tires? Many are recovered at auto tire dealers at the time tires are replaced. Retailers are required to accept one tire for every tire they sell, but a fee may be charged. Although the fees are usually below $10 per tire, residents may not be willing to pay for the disposal and may take the used tires with them. These tires are prime candidates for illegal dumping. Tire collection programs receive tires from three major sources; residential, commercial, and clean-up of illegally dumped tires.

Tire Collection Strategies

Year Round Programs
Some communities provide year round tire collection programs for residents and businesses. These programs usually take one of two forms; drop-off or curbside. Drop-off programs are typically located adjacent to other waste management activities such as at landfills or compost sites. Sites have controlled access and fees are charged based either on number of tires or weight. The fees are charged to cover costs to recycle the tires and may also cover operational costs. Most programs accept tires from businesses as well as residential sources.

Curb-side programs often are tied to a bulk collection program. Communities using this type of program require residents to register for pick-up by telephone, electronically or through the sale of stickers. A limit of five tires per pick-up is often imposed so as to only recover residential sources of tires. Some communities charge fees for this service, while others absorb the cost of tire collection as part of their solid waste budget.

Short-term Programs
Communities using this type of program hold tire collections for a limited time one or more times each year. A central collection site is designated for use by residents and businesses. Sites have controlled access and are attended during hours of operation. Program costs are usually recovered through fees charged to those delivering tires. These programs can also be held in conjunction with other programs such as Clean Sweeps or home compost bin sales.
Tire Collection as Part of a Collection Contract
A provision for collecting waste tires can be incorporated in contracts for collecting garbage or recycling. This method allows residents to contact the waste hauler directly to schedule pick-up of used tires. The hauler may use a sticker system or directly bill the homeowner for the cost of collection. If desired a community may choose to subsidize this program, but it is not typically done.

Tire Collection through Partnerships with Private Businesses
A community may choose to limit involvement in a program of waste tire collection. In this case local tire dealers are contacted to determine their interest in serving as a location to receive tires. Communities can direct residents and others to participating businesses. In this case the main function of the program is to educate residents on where waste tires are accepted.

Program Funding and Selection
Funding of waste tire collection programs is typically covered through user fees, but may be subsidized through other solid waste activities or tax revenues. The size and scope of a program can be tailored to fit your budget. Communities may also choose to incorporate the cost to clean-up illegal dump sites within the cost of the program. In addition to program costs there are other questions to consider when deciding on a collection program.

- How much staff time will the program require?
- Should pick-up service be offered to those not able to transport the tires?
- What is the level of illegal dumping in the community?
- What is the level of service expected by residents?
- How will the program be promoted (education)?

Choosing a Service Provider for Collected Tires
The most important decision you make may be the vendor or end market you choose for the tires your program collects. The vendor should be capable of handling the volume of tires your program expects to collect. Consider a visit to the vendor’s site to ensure the tires are stored and processed in an environmentally sound manner. Ask for references from current and past customers and about the end market(s) the vendor is using.

The Wisconsin Markets Directory available online at www.uwex.edu/shwec/wrmd lists vendors providing recycling services for waste tires. You can also contact your regional DNR office for more information.

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