

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

With a never-ending commitment for preserving and protecting the citizens of Wisconsin and the environment that surrounds them, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) serves as an invaluable resource and environmental beacon for healthcare facilities, schools and communities across Wisconsin through committed policies geared at waste reduction and straight forward pollution prevention.

WDNR's medical waste reduction campaign began in 1994, when Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to require source separation of infectious waste and implementation of medical waste reduction plans. These plans included the training staff, annual assessments of progress and regular reporting to WDNR on all aspects of the plan. While the state does not mandate specific reduction goals, each individual facility does set its own goals. As a result, since 1995, over 600 medical facilities have submitted annual reports in which facilities reported reductions of 25%-50% in infectious waste (regulated waste). Some facilities reduced infectious waste by 90% simply by implementing source separation. Facilities, such as St. Luke's in Milwaukee, have reduced all their wastes by over 50% long before the H2E 2005 deadline.

Because of these highly successful reduction rates and stricter clean air regulations, all but four of the state's hospital incinerators closed and there are no longer any commercial medical waste incinerators in Wisconsin.

Not content to reduce only infectious waste, DNR began encouraging its medical facilities to eliminate the use of mercury in medicine in the mid-1990s. DNR sponsored four mercury reduction workshops and several mercury collection programs for healthcare facilities and schools across the state, collecting over 2,500 lbs of mercury from 1999-2001. In an effort to encourage healthcare facilities to sponsor similar programs within their own hospitals and communities, DNR developed and distributed waste reduction fact sheets to health care professionals. Many of these fact sheets are available on the DNR website, www.dnr.state.wi.us.

To continue its quest to reduce medical wastes, DNR recruited all 600 of its reporting medical facilities to become H2E partners and continues to encourage facilities to turn their attention towards reductions in PBTs, plastics, water and energy.

In addition to writing numerous publications about medical waste management and waste reduction and providing technical assistance when needed, DNR maintains the lead in reducing public health risks associated with sharps in waste. DNR encourages medical facilities, pharmacies and local governments to collect sharps voluntarily from the public. Where the collection programs exist, waste haulers and recycling facility workers report fewer needle-stick injuries, and sending fewer recyclables to landfills due to the actual or suspected presence of sharps.

These successes in addition to WDNR's own internal waste reduction policies and other "green" policies aimed at Environmentally Preferable product purchases, will enable WDNR to make bold strides forward in the coming years. WDNR continues to demonstrate a strong commitment

to waste reduction in general and to medical waste and mercury/PBT reduction in particular. It is for this environmental commitment that we are proud to honor them today with this award.