



LA CROSSE COUNTY

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2020

La Crosse County Household Hazardous
Materials Program Annual Report to
Stakeholders

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Mission, History and Scope

In September of 2001, the Household Hazardous Waste Advisory Panel (HHWAP) to the Solid Waste Committee recommended the formation of a Household Hazardous Materials (HHM) program to be housed in a permanent facility at the La Crosse County landfill complex. This vision became a reality with the opening of the HHM facility in the fall of 2003. For the past 18 years, the La Crosse County Solid Waste Department has continuously operated the HHM program, accepting hazardous waste from households, farms and qualifying small businesses. The HHWAP envisioned a program that would “effectively remove toxic and dangerous household hazardous wastes from the waste stream in a cost-effective manner that is satisfactory to the users and adapts to meet the changing needs of the county residents.”

Responding to this vision and to the needs of the community, the HHM program has expanded the wastes that it accepts from strictly chemicals to now include batteries, compressed gas cylinders, electronics (e-waste), fluorescent lamps, non-controlled pharmaceuticals, oil filters, PFAS-containing fire suppression foam, refrigerant-containing appliances and regulated medical waste.

The purpose of this report is to keep the stakeholders of the La Crosse County Household Hazardous Materials program informed about its status.

Program Benefits

The HHM program continues to serve the community in many ways. First and foremost, toxic materials are removed from the solid waste stream. E-waste was the number one material collected at the HHM facility representing 34% of the volume managed by the HHM program in 2020. Recycling e-waste ensures that valuable commodities are recovered and not disposed of. The HHM program works cooperatively with area recyclers to ensure the materials are being managed in a responsible, cost effective manner. In Wisconsin, manufacturers are responsible for some of the cost of recycling the electronics that they produce. Since the E-Cycle Wisconsin initiative began in 2010, a reliable electronics recycling market has developed.

Materials classified as hazardous waste are the second most received item at the HHM facility representing 23% of the volume managed by the program in 2020. The HHM program works with licensed hazardous waste transporters and disposal facilities to ensure these items are properly treated to remove their hazardous constituents and no longer present human and environmental health threats.

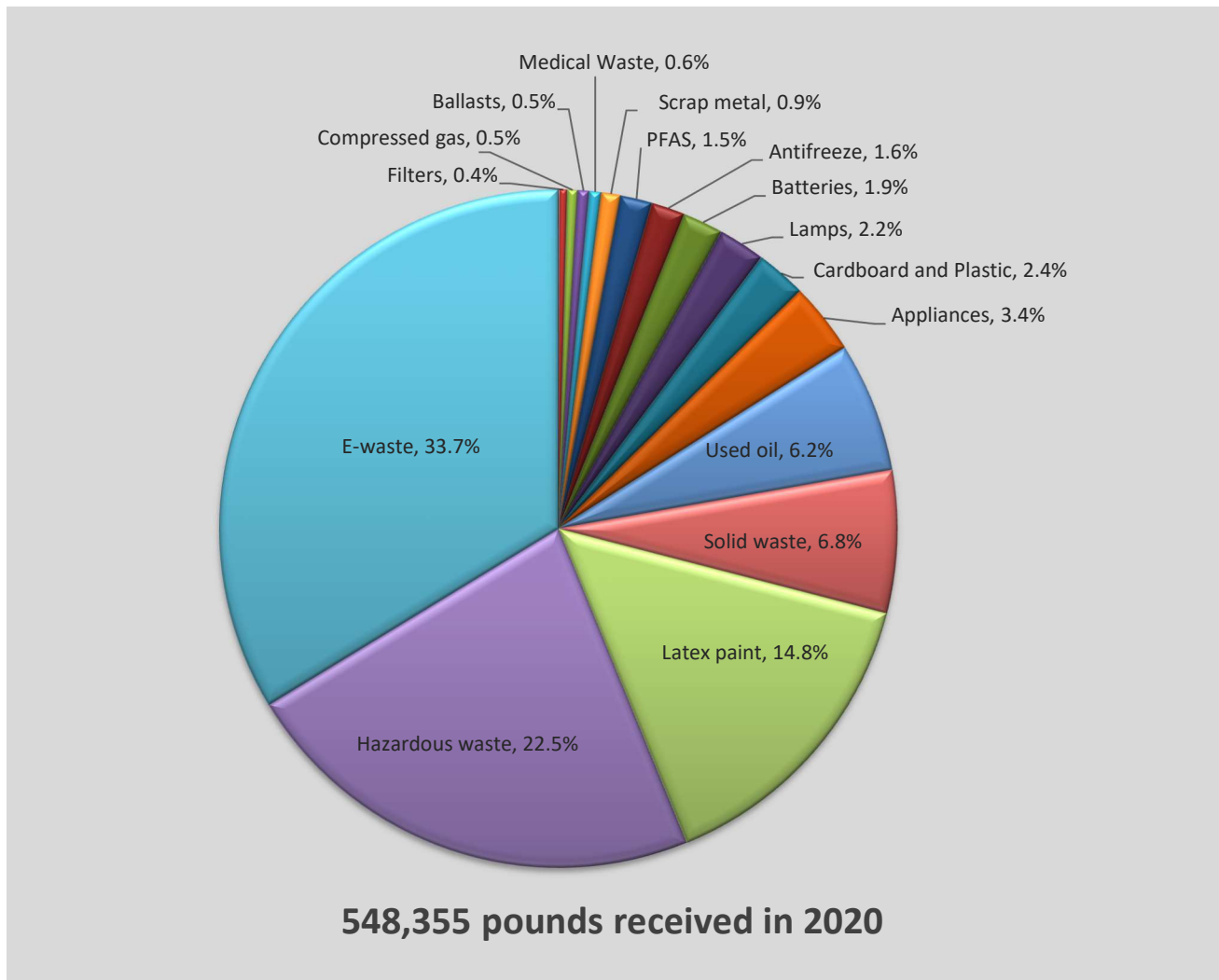
Latex paint is the third largest material managed by the HHM program representing 15% of the volume received in 2020. Latex paint recycling would improve the HHM program’s overall waste management hierarchy if a cost-effective means of doing so could be identified. Implementation of an initiative equivalent to the Minnesota Paint Care program in Wisconsin would provide for dependable latex paint recycling and reduce disposal expenses.

While assuring the proper disposal of hazardous waste is the highest priority, much of the waste accepted by the HHM program can be reused or recycled. Of the 548,355 pounds of materials collected in 2020, 78% were diverted from landfilling. Diverting hazardous materials through the HHM program greatly reduces their risk of their release into the environment. A majority of these diverted materials were reused, recycled or utilized as an industrial fuel.

Included in these diversion totals is 70,678 pounds of usable materials that were given back to the community through the Reuse Room. This greatly benefits citizens who are able to use these products and provides a more environmentally sustainable option for these materials. Many people are surprised when they learn about disposal costs. In many cases, products cost more to properly dispose of than the original purchase price. For 2020, materials placed in the Reuse Room saved the HHM facility over \$85,000 in disposal costs.

In summary, removing hazardous materials from the waste stream improves the performance of the landfill, wastewater treatment facility and the Xcel Waste-to-Energy facility. Liquid wastes, including latex paint, have a negative impact on Xcel's ability to process burnable waste into refuse-derived fuel. When hazardous materials are disposed in the garbage, many will end up being buried in the landfill. As a result, volatile organic compounds and hazardous pollutants can be released to the environment via air emissions or absorbed into the leachate and impacting the local wastewater treatment facility.

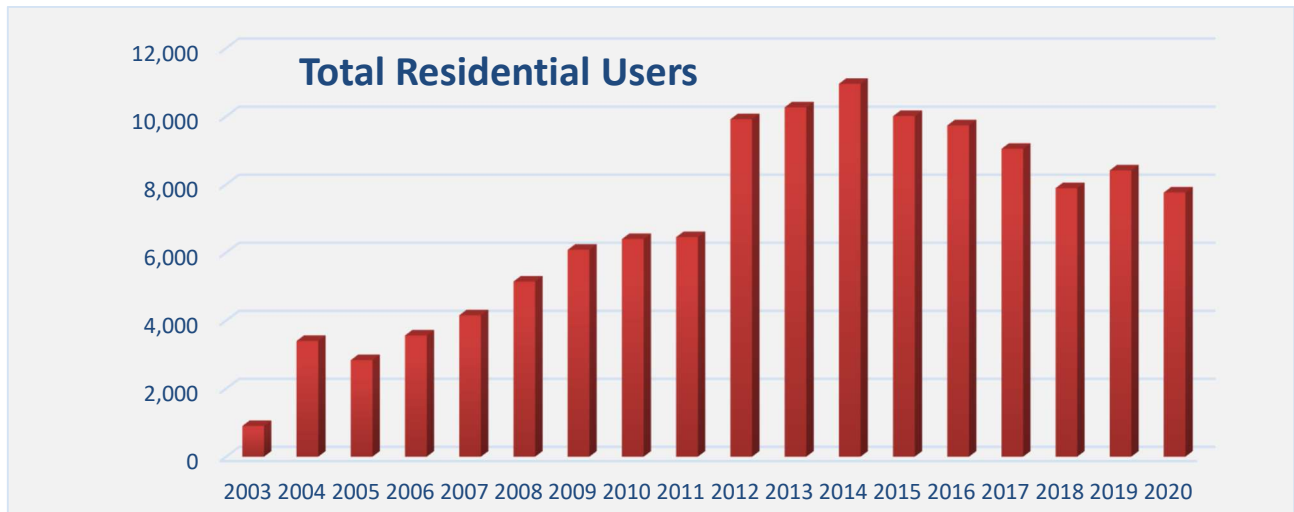
The 548,355 pounds of materials received at the HHM facility in 2020 were received in the following proportions:



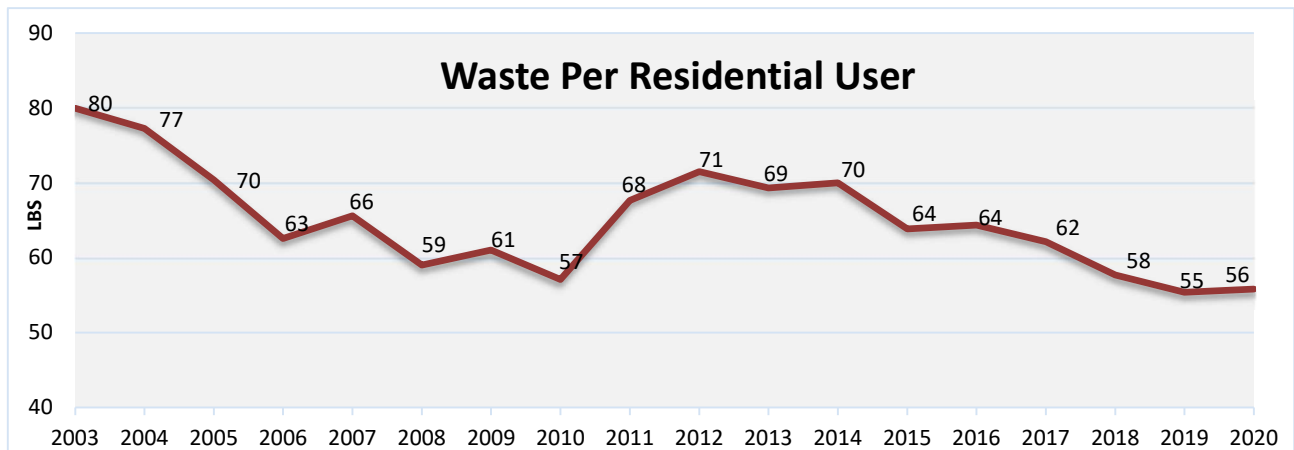
Program Utilization

Residential Users

In 2020, 7,763 household users utilized the La Crosse County Hazardous Materials (HHM) program. This represents a slight decline in usership from the previous year; however, it should be noted that the HHM facility was closed approximately five weeks in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

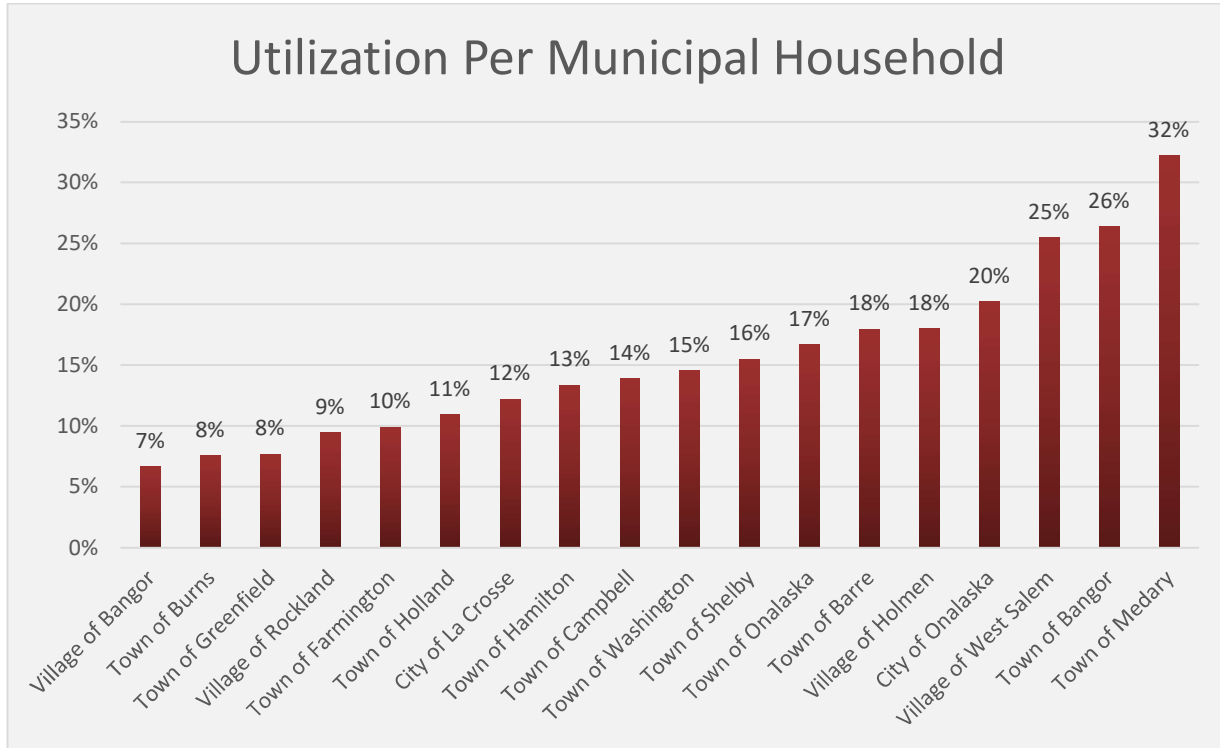


Since 2015, the average weight of hazardous materials brought in to the HHM facility per residential user has stabilized. This is representative of our system. After the initial start of the program, users were able to clean up stockpiled waste that they had not previously been able to dispose of. The chart below depicts the average amount of waste by weight brought in by each household user since the program's inception. This data includes all materials collected by the HHM program. The average amount of materials brought in per residential customer in 2020 was 56 pounds.



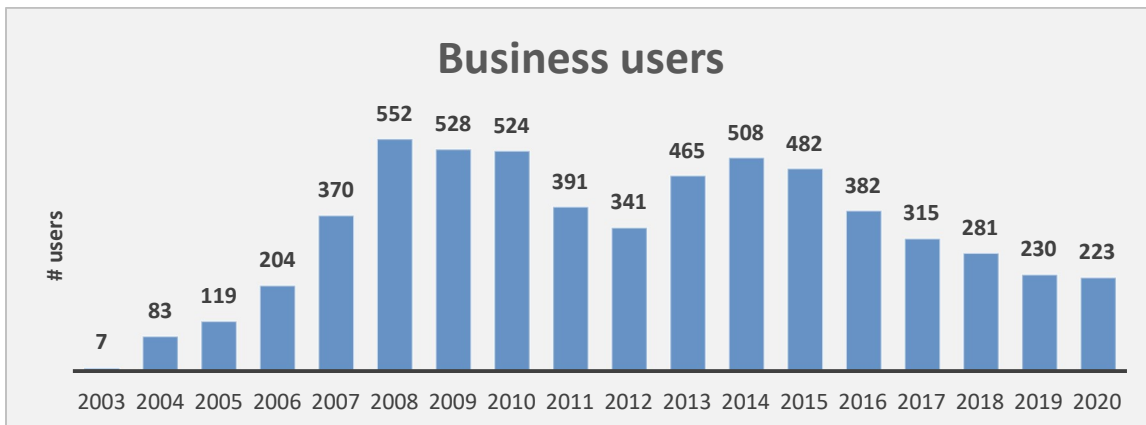
A spike in accepted residential materials occurred in 2012. This coincided with the statewide electronic waste landfill ban and the HHM program's acceptance of electronic waste. The initial stockpile of electronic waste in the community has since been reduced. In addition, today's electronic devices are significantly lighter than in the past resulting in less weight at the time of disposal.

The following chart shows that in 2020, the program was utilized by residents throughout the county regardless of where they live; however, the level of participation varies among the individual municipalities. Overall, 15.1% of La Crosse County households utilized the HHM facility which is exceptional among comparable programs.



Business and Organization Users

The HHM program accepts materials categorized as hazardous waste from businesses and organizations that qualify as very small quantity generators (VSQG's). VSQGs generate hazardous waste at a rate of less than 220 pounds per month. In addition, the program accepts latex paint, regulated medical waste, electronics, used oil and universal waste from any sized business and organization. During 2020, small business utilization of the HHM program declined slightly from 230 to 223. Nevertheless, 59,751 pounds of small business materials were brought into the facility representing a 6% increase from the year previous. An ongoing marketing campaign aimed at increasing this important customer base will continue in 2021.



Off-Site Collection Events

In 2020, the HHM program collaborated in seven off-site hazardous waste collection events with four Wisconsin counties (Crawford, Jackson, Trempealeau and Vernon) and two Houston County, Minnesota municipalities (Houston, La Crescent).

The following is a summary of 2020 HHM program off-site hazardous waste collection events.

Off-Site Collection Summary

Wisconsin Clean Sweep			Houston Co. Minnesota		
Location	Participants	Wt. Collected	Location	Participants	Wt. Collected
Crawford Co.	133	3,097 lbs.	Houston	41	1,305 lbs.
Jackson Co.	122	2,993 lbs.	La Crescent	118	2,762 lbs.
Trempealeau Co.	148	3,240 lbs.			
Vernon Co. (2)	352	6,617 lbs.			
TOTAL	755	15,947 lbs.	TOTAL	159	4,067 lbs.

Public Awareness

Public information is an important part of the La Crosse County HHM program. This includes brochures, a web site (<https://www.lacrossecounty.org/solidwaste/hhm.asp>), direct mail (via municipal recycling newsletters) and social media advertising. Face-to-face interaction with the community is valued. Unfortunately, facility tours as well as the La Crosse Earth Fair and the La Crosse Area Builder's Association home show were cancelled in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, over 2,500 customers were provided with technical assistance including advising which waste streams could be placed in their residential garbage and ultimately used as fuel for the Xcel Energy RDF facility on French Island. In addition, HHM staff distributed hundreds of program brochures, contributed content to the County's website and Facebook pages and participated in several media interviews. Every partnering county publicized their collection event using a variety of outreach formats.

HHM Program Funding

A 2007 Intergovernmental Agreement between La Crosse County and the 18 municipalities of the County established funding contributions in the form of a \$1/capita from each municipality. This was matched by La Crosse County. These contributions provided over half of the program's funding. Using this funding formula, most of the HHM program's services are free of charge to La Crosse County residents. This Intergovernmental Agreement was renewed on January 1st, 2018 and supports the operation and maintenance of the HHM program by contributing \$1.30 per capita per annum by February 1st of each year. This payment increases at a rate of \$.05/capita each year until 2022, at which time the payment will be \$1.50/capita. Beginning in 2023 and extending through 2027, the payment will increase at a rate of 2% per year. The calculation of the per capita payment is adjusted each year according to population estimates as published by Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Service Center. This agreement allows for secure and stable program funding extending to December 31, 2027.

The HHM program also receives funding through DATCP Clean Sweep Program. In 2020, the program was awarded \$57,670. This was a 4.9% increase from 2019.

Revenue received from qualifying small businesses are an important part of the facility's operations. In 2020, the HHM program grossed \$66,266.86 from local business customers. This was a 23% increase from 2019.

Looking ahead

The impacts of per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to human health and the environment is a growing concern. These chemicals can be found in many household products as well as fire suppression foams. The HHM program is partnering with its hazardous waste vendor to collect and incinerate these materials as they come into the facility. In 2020, the HHM program collected and managed over 8,000 pounds of PFAS-containing wastes and will continue to be an outlet for these materials in the future. The HHM program will continue to monitor evolving PFAS standards to ensure responsible management of these materials.

On October 24th, the HHM facility hosted its first voluntary ammunition collection event. This was a collaborative effort with local emergency response groups. Approximately 500 rounds were collected and shipped to a licensed hazardous waste incinerator. Lessons learned during the event will be evaluated with the hope of offering this as a year-round service in the future.

In late December of 2020, the HHM program expanded its customer service hours and is now open to the public Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The facility will continue to offer residential drop off hours on the first and third Saturdays during the months of April through October. These expanded hours will be more convenient for everyone utilizing the system.

The HHM program will continue working to strengthen its partnerships with area businesses. We have expanded our online presence and reach through an ongoing marketing campaign. We will also continue to provide outreach and education regarding proper disposal and handling of household hazardous materials.

Conclusion

The Household Hazardous Materials program remains a valuable and necessary service to the people of this area as demonstrated by consistent usership and ongoing community support. Program staff strives to continue providing a program that fulfills the original vision of the HHWAP by meeting the evolving needs the community. As always, the HHM staff appreciates feedback from its customers and stakeholders.