



# LA CROSSE COUNTY

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## 2022

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 20 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.

Program hours have been expanded to serve customers Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., year-round. Appointment times for small businesses and customers with large loads are also available.

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 31% of the volume managed by the HHM program in 2022. 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 29% of the volume managed by the program in 2022. 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 11% of the volume received in 2022. 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.

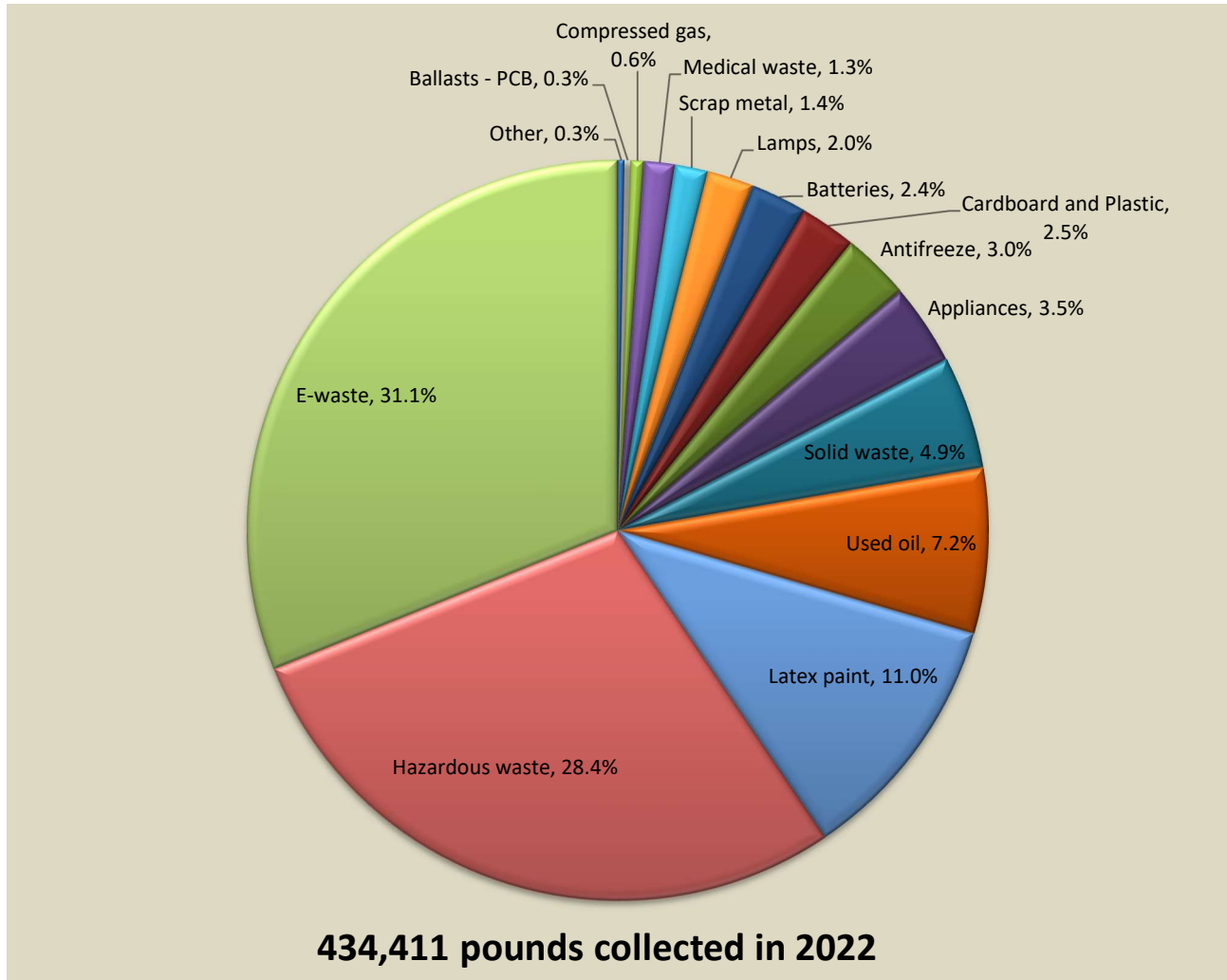
While assuring the proper disposal of hazardous waste is the highest priority, much of the waste accepted by the HHM program can be reused or recycled. Of the 434,411 pounds of materials collected in 2022, nearly 85% were diverted from landfilling. Diverting hazardous materials through the HHM program 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 85,203 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. These materials would retail for over \$200,000 and saves the program (and taxpayers) tens of thousands in disposal expenses.

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 impacting the local wastewater treatment facility.

The 434,411 pounds of materials received at the HHM facility in 2022 were received in the following proportions:



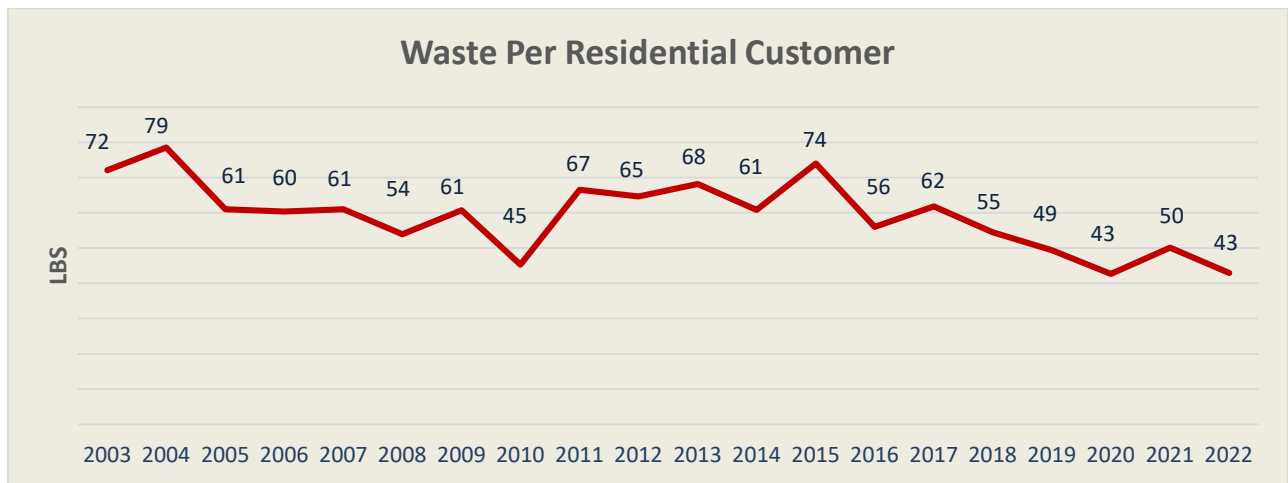
# Program Utilization

## Residential Customers

In 2022, 7,569 household customers utilized the La Crosse County Hazardous Materials (HHM) program.

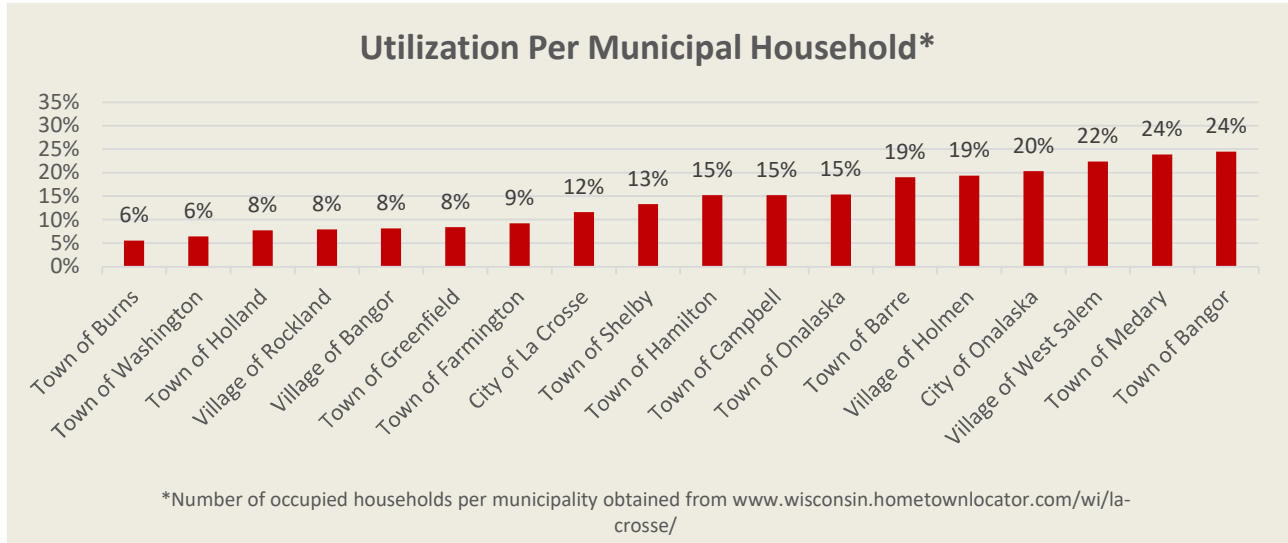


Since 2015, the average weight of hazardous materials brought in to the HHM facility per residential user has stabilized. This is representative of our system. After the initial start of the program, users were able to clean up stockpiled waste that they had not previously been able to dispose of. The chart below depicts the average amount of waste by weight brought in by each household user since the program's inception. The average amount of materials brought in per residential customer in 2022 was 43 pounds.



A spike in accepted residential materials occurred in late 2011. 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 2022, 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, 14.5% of La Crosse County households utilized the HHM facility which is exceptional among comparable programs within the United States.



**Business and Organization Customers**

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 or organization. During 2022, 52,528 pounds of small business materials were brought into the facility. The amount of waste per business customer has stabilized since the program's inception.



## Additional Services

### Off-Site Collection Events

In 2022, the HHM program participated in two off-site hazardous waste collection in Houston County, Minnesota (Houston and La Crescent). The following is a summary of those off-site waste collection events.

Houston County, MN		
Location	Participants	Wt. Collected
Houston	69	5,585 lbs.
La Crescent	77	4,594 lbs.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>10,179 lbs.</b>

### Community Sharps Drop Boxes

In September 2021, the HHM program began collaboration with the Alliance to Heal consortium by strategizing a cost-effective and sustainable means of servicing nine county-wide sharps drop-boxes. To date, the HHM program has collected nearly 4,000 pounds of sharps for proper disposal.

## 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 extremely valuable in understanding the needs of our constituents. Nearly 1,600 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 contributed content to the County's website and Facebook pages and participated in several media interviews as well as the community Earth Fair event and the La Crosse Area Home and Builder's Show. Lastly, a series of informational videos were created to help educate the public about the scope of services and can be found on the HHM program's web page.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 2022, HHM was awarded \$21,000.

Revenue received from qualifying small businesses are an important part of the facility's operations. These proceeds enhance the program's financial stability and allows the program to expand without an additional encumbrance to County taxpayers. In 2022, the HHM program grossed \$63,393.06 from local business customers. This was a 4% increase from the year previous.

### **Looking ahead**

As part of the program's evolution, HHM is adding three new waste streams to its collection services in 2023. These include vapes/E-cigarettes, smoke detectors, and water filters. These newly added programs provide value by reducing human and environmental health risks to our community. Disposal services for these items will be offered at no charge to La Crosse County residents.

### **Conclusion**

The La Crosse County 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 and by growing to meet the evolving needs the community. As always, the HHM staff appreciates feedback from its customers and stakeholders and will strive to provide the best in public service in 2023.