LNCT GROUP OF COLLEGES

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Topic: SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Solid-waste management- The collecting, treating, and disposing of solid material that is discarded because it has served its purpose or is no longer useful. Improper disposal of municipal solid waste can create unsanitary conditions, and these conditions in turn can lead to pollution of the environment and to outbreaks of vector-borne disease that is, diseases spread by rodents and insects. The tasks of solid-waste management present complex technical challenges. They also pose a wide variety of administrative, economic, and social problems that must be managed and solved.

Sanitary landfill

Solid-Waste Characteristics-

Composition and properties

The sources of solid waste include residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial activities. Certain types of wastes that cause immediate danger to exposed individuals or environments are classified as hazardous; these are discussed in the article hazardous-waste management.

All non-hazardous solid waste from a community that requires collection and transport to a processing or disposal site is called refuse or municipal solid waste (MSW). Refuse includes garbage and rubbish. Garbage is mostly decomposable food waste; rubbish is mostly dry material such as glass, paper, cloth, or wood. Garbage is highly putrescible or decomposable, whereas rubbish is not. Trash is rubbish that includes bulky items such as old refrigerators, couches, or large tree stumps. Trash requires special collection and handling. Construction (or debris) is a significant component of total solid waste quantities (about 20 percent in the United States), although it is not considered to be part of the MSW

stream. However, because C&D waste is inert and non-hazardous, it is usually disposed of in municipal sanitary landfills.

Another type of solid waste, perhaps the fastest-growing component in many developed countries, is electronic waste, or e-waste, which includes discarded computer equipment, televisions, telephones, and a variety of other electronic devices. Concern over this type of waste is escalating. Lead, mercury, and cadmium are among the materials of concern in electronic devices, and governmental policies may be required to regulate their recycling and disposal. Solid-waste characteristics vary considerably among communities and nations. In the United States paper and paperboard products make up close to 40 percent of the total weight of MSW; food waste accounts for less than 10 percent. The rest is a mixture of yard trimmings, wood, glass, metal, plastic, leather, cloth, and other miscellaneous materials. In a loose or uncompacted state, MSW of this type weighs approximately 120 kg per cubic metre. These figures vary with geographic location, economic conditions, season of the year, and many other factors. Waste characteristics from each community must be studied carefully before any treatment or disposal facility is designed and built.

Generation and storage

Rates of solid-waste generation vary widely. In the United States, for example, municipal refuse is generated at an average rate of approximately 2 kg per person per day. Japan generates roughly half this amount, yet in Canada the rate is 2.7 kg per person per day. In some developing countries the average rate can be lower than 0.5 kg per person per day. These data include refuse from commercial, institutional, and industrial as well as residential sources. The actual rates of refuse generation must be carefully determined when a community plans a solid-waste management project.

Most communities require household refuse to be stored in durable, easily cleaned containers with tight-fitting covers in order to minimize insect infestation and offensive odours.

Solid-Waste Collection

Collecting and transporting

- Proper solid-waste collection is important for the protection of public health, safety, and environmental quality. It is a labour-intensive activity, accounting for approximately three-quarters of the total cost of solid-waste management. Public employees are often assigned to the task, but sometimes it is more economical for private companies to do the work under contract to the municipality or for private collectors to be paid by individual home owners. A driver and one or two loaders serve each collection vehicle. These are typically trucks of the enclosed, compacting type, with capacities up to 30 cubic metres .
- The task of selecting an optimal collection route is a complex problem, especially for large and densely populated cities. An optimal route is one that results in the most efficient use of labour and equipment, and selecting such a route requires the application of computer analyses that account for all the many design variables in a large and complex network. Collection of refuse in rural areas can present a special problem, since the population densities are low, leading to high unit costs.
- Refuse collection usually occurs at least once per week because of the rapid decomposition of food waste. The amount of garbage in the refuse of an individual home can be reduced by garbage grinders, or garbage disposals. Ground garbage puts an extra load on sewerage systems, but this can usually be accommodated. Many communities now conduct source separation and recycling programs, in which homeowners and businesses separate recyclable materials from garbage and place them in

separate containers for collection. In addition, some communities have drop-off centres where residents can bring recyclables.

Transfer stations

If the final destination of the refuse is not near the community in which it is generated, one or more transfer stations may be necessary. A transfer station is a central facility where refuse from many collection vehicles is combined into a larger vehicle, such as a tractor-trailer unit. Open-top trailers are designed to carry about 76 cubic metres of uncompacted waste to a regional processing or disposal location. Closed compactor-type trailers are also available, but they must be equipped with ejector mechanisms. In a direct discharge type of station, several collection trucks empty directly into the transport vehicle. In a storage discharge type of station, refuse is first emptied into a storage pit or onto a platform, and then machinery is used to hoist or push the solid waste into the transport vehicle. Large transfer stations can handle more than 500 tons of refuse per day.

Solid-Waste Treatment and Disposal

Once collected, municipal solid waste may be treated in order to reduce the total volume and weight of material that requires final disposal. Treatment changes the form of the waste and makes it easier to handle. It can also serve to recover certain materials, as well as heat energy, for recycling or reuse.

Incineration
Furnace operation

Burning is a very effective method of reducing the volume and weight of solid waste, though it is a source of greenhouse gas emissions. In

modern incinerators the waste is burned inside a properly designed furnace under very carefully controlled conditions. The combustible portion of the waste combines with oxygen, releasing mostly carbon dioxide, water vapour, and heat. Incineration can reduce the volume of uncompacted waste by more than 90 percent, leaving an inert residue of ash, glass, metal, and other solid materials called bottom ash. Bottom ash and fly ash are usually combined and disposed of in a landfill. If the ash is found to contain toxic metals, it must be managed as a hazardous waste.

Combustion in a furnace occurs in two stages: primary and secondary. In primary combustion, moisture is driven off, and the waste is ignited and volatilized. In secondary combustion, the remaining unburned gases and particulates are oxidized, eliminating odours and reducing the amount of fly ash in the exhaust. When the refuse is very moist, auxiliary gas or fuel oil is sometimes burned to start the primary combustion.

Energy recovery

The energy value of refuse can be as much as one-third that of coal, depending on the paper content, and the heat given off during incineration can be recovered by the use of a refractory-lined furnace coupled to a boiler. Boilers convert the heat of combustion into steam or hot water, thus allowing the energy content of the refuse to be recycled. Incinerators that recycle heat energy in this way are called waste-to-energy plants. Instead of a separate furnace and boiler, a water-tube wall furnace may also be used for energy recovery.

Composting

Another method of treating municipal solid waste is composting, a biological process in which the organic portion of refuse is allowed to decompose under carefully controlled conditions. Microbes metabolize

the organic waste material and reduce its volume by as much as 50 percent. The stabilized product is called compost or humus. It resembles potting soil in texture and odour and may be used as a soil conditioner or mulch.

Composting offers a method of processing and recycling both garbage and sewage sludge in one operation. As more stringent environmental rules and siting constraints limit the use of solid-waste incineration and landfill options, the application of composting is likely to increase. The steps involved in the process include sorting and separating, size reduction, and digestion of the refuse.

Sorting and shredding

The decomposable materials in refuse are isolated from glass, metal, and other inorganic items through sorting and separating operations. These are carried out mechanically, using differences in such physical characteristics of the refuse as size, density, and magnetic properties. Shredding or pulverizing reduces the size of the waste articles, resulting in a uniform mass of material. It is accomplished with hammer mills and rotary shredders.

Digesting and processing

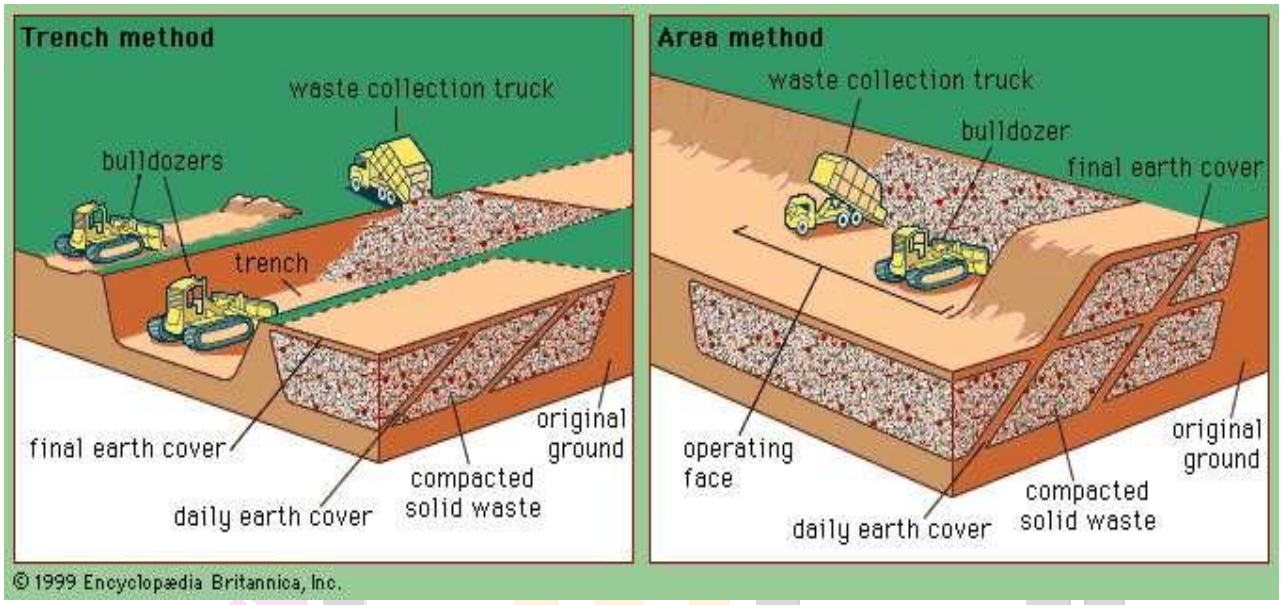
Pulverized waste is ready for composting either by the open windrow method or in an enclosed mechanical facility. They are turned or mixed every few days to provide air for the microbes digesting the organics. Depending on moisture conditions, it may take five to eight weeks for complete digestion of the waste. Because of the metabolic action of aerobic bacteria, temperatures in an active compost pile reach about 65 °C (150 °F), killing pathogenic organisms that may be in the waste material.

- Open windrow composting requires relatively large land areas. Enclosed mechanical composting facilities can reduce land requirements by about 85 percent.
- Mechanical composting systems employ one or more closed tanks or digesters equipped with rotating vanes that mix and aerate the shredded waste. Complete digestion of the waste takes about one week.
- Land disposal is the most common management strategy for municipal solid waste. Refuse can be safely deposited in a sanitary landfill, a disposal site that is carefully selected, designed, constructed, and operated to protect the environment and public health.
- One of the most important factors relating to landfilling is that the buried waste never comes in contact with surface water or groundwater. Engineering design requirements include a minimum distance between the bottom of the landfill and the seasonally high groundwater table.
- Most new landfills are required to have an impermeable liner or barrier at the bottom, as well as a system of groundwater-monitoring wells.
- Completed landfill sections must be capped with an impermeable cover to keep precipitation or surface runoff away from the buried waste. Bottom and cap liners may be made of flexible plastic membranes, layers of clay soil.

Constructing the landfill

The basic element of a sanitary landfill is the refuse cell. This is a confined portion of the site in which refuse is spread and compacted in thin layers. Several layers may be compacted on top of one another to a maximum depth of about 3 metres. The compacted refuse occupies about one-quarter of its original loose volume. At the end of each day's operation, the refuse is covered with a layer of soil to eliminate windblown litter, odours, and insect or rodent problems. One refuse cell thus contains the daily volume of compacted refuse and soil cover. Several adjacent refuse cells make up a lift, and eventually a landfill may comprise two or more lifts stacked one on

top of the other. The final cap for a completed landfill may also be covered with a layer of topsoil that can support vegetative growth.



Controlling by-products

- Organic material buried in a landfill decomposes by anaerobic microbial action. Complete decomposition usually takes more than 20 years. One of the by-products of this decomposition is methane gas. Methane is poisonous and explosive when diluted in the air, and it can flow long distances through porous layers of soil. If it is allowed to collect in basements or other confined areas, dangerous conditions may arise. In modern landfills, methane movement is controlled by impermeable barriers and by gas-venting systems. In some landfills the methane gas is collected and recovered for use as a fuel.
- A highly contaminated liquid called leachate is another by-product of decomposition in sanitary landfills. Most leachate is the result of runoff that infiltrates the refuse cells and comes in contact with decomposing garbage. If leachate reaches the

groundwater or seeps out onto the ground surface, serious environmental pollution problems can occur, including

the possible contamination of drinking-water supplies. Methods of controlling leachate include the interception of surface water in order to prevent it from entering the landfill and the use of impermeable liners or barriers between the waste and the groundwater. New landfill sites should also be provided with groundwater-monitoring wells and leachate-collection and treatment systems.

Importance in waste management

In communities where appropriate sites are available, sanitary landfills usually provide the most economical option for disposal of nonrecyclable refuse. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find sites that offer adequate capacity, accessibility, and environmental conditions. Nevertheless, landfills will always play a key role in solid-waste management. It is not possible to recycle all components of solid waste, and there will always be residues from incineration and other treatment processes that will eventually require disposal underground. In addition, landfills can actually improve poor-quality land. In some communities properly completed landfills are converted into recreational parks, playgrounds, or golf courses.