

# PREVENTATION

## MANUAL



## Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

# RCRA Orientation Manual

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# USE OF THE MANUAL

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This document has been reviewed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and has been approved for publication. Mention of trade names, products, or services does not convey, and should not be interpreted as conveying, official EPA approval, endorsement, or recommendation.

This manual serves as an effective introduction to the various facets and basic structure of the RCRA program designed to regulate solid waste, hazardous waste, and underground storage tanks. In order to achieve this goal, the *RCRA Orientation Manual* is designed for EPA and state staff, members of the regulated community, and the general public who wish to better understand RCRA. While this manual constitutes a review of the RCRA program, it is not a substitute for RCRA or its implementing regulations, nor is it a regulation itself. Thus, it cannot impose legally binding requirements on EPA, states, or the regulated community. In addition, the manual is not intended to modify or affect in any way existing statutory or regulatory requirements or Agency policies; it is simply intended to briefly summarize those requirements and policies. If there is any unintended variation between any statements in this manual and existing requirements or policy statements, the requirements or policy statements are controlling.

Further information is available over the Internet on the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response's Homepage at: <http://www.epa.gov/oswer>. For more detailed information about hazardous and nonhazardous solid waste, please see the Office of Solid Waste's Homepage at: <http://www.epa.gov/osw>. Regulatory information and documents are also available from the RCRA, Superfund & EPCRA Call Center at either (703) 412-9810 in the Washington DC area or (800) 424-9346 toll-free elsewhere. TDD users should call either (703) 412-3323 in the Washington DC area or (800) 553-7673 toll-free elsewhere. The Call Center is accessible over the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hotline>. Many RCRA guidance documents, publications, and other outreach materials are available on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/rcraonline>.

# FOREWORD

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This manual updates the *2000 RCRA Orientation Manual*, which has proven to be a popular and valuable resource for anyone working with EPA's solid and hazardous waste management program or underground storage tank program. Since the manual's publication in 1990, the RCRA program has evolved dramatically. As a result of changes in the dynamics of solid and hazardous waste management, as well as changes in the regulatory expectations and demands of government, public, and private entities, the RCRA program has been steadily modified through new regulations, policies, Agency-wide initiatives, and Congressional mandates. The manual's revision reflects the progress that has been made in the program and documents the changes in RCRA.

At this time, the RCRA Subtitle C hazardous waste regulatory framework is completely in place, and almost all states are implementing large portions of the program. EPA has achieved significant progress in establishing provisions to fully protect both ground water and air resources. Under Subtitle D, the establishment of municipal solid waste landfill criteria ensures adequate protection of human health and the environment from solid waste disposal practices. In addition, the Agency has significantly expanded initiatives aimed at reducing the amount of waste generated, and in the event that this cannot be achieved, making any resulting waste management more efficient. Lastly, the Subtitle I underground storage tank program is being fully implemented, and tank owners and operators are working towards upgrading their units to meet the

most current and environmentally protective management standards.

As we move ahead in the continuing implementation of RCRA, several priority initiatives stand out. For example, EPA continues to encourage waste minimization in order to reduce the quantities of waste generated and the volume of waste that needs to be handled by practices such as land disposal and combustion. Also, the RCRA program is advancing risk-based regulation by evaluating new ways to regulate wastes based on the risk that they might pose to human health and the environment. Lastly, EPA is increasing the incorporation of states, the regulated community, and the public into the regulatory process in order to further a protective environmental strategy that is easy to implement, provides feasible compliance options, and takes into account the interests of citizens.

The continued success of the RCRA program rests on the involvement of all stakeholders. The *RCRA Orientation Manual* provides a mechanism through which affected parties can learn more about the program, and it serves as an effective introduction to the basic structure and various facets of the RCRA program designed to regulate solid and hazardous waste.

In addition to this manual, two new documents provide an informative look back at the past and a speculative look forward to the future of the RCRA program. For a look back at past successes, the report *25 Years of RCRA: Building on Our Past to Protect Our Future* commemorates RCRA's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in October 2001 and highlights the

## *Forward*

accomplishments of RCRA's protective framework to date. For a look ahead, the draft white paper *Beyond RCRA: Prospects for Waste and Materials Management in the Year 2020* identifies trends that could affect the future of waste management and resource conservation and also suggests general strategies that might be used to build a new vision for the future of the program. For information regarding document availability contact the RCRA, Superfund & EPCRA Call Center (see section entitled Use of the Manual).

The *RCRA Orientation Manual* was developed by the Office of Solid Waste, Communications, Information, and Resources Management Division. Special thanks to the many individuals at EPA Headquarters who reviewed the drafts and provided comments.