

Making disposal costs fair, equitable

For a few years I have been writing off and on about what I refer to as “problematic products” that have been banned from the landfill by the State of California. Although I certainly appreciate the reasoning behind these bans (toxic materials getting into the environment), I take exception to the State not helping local governments and consumers to solve the problems those bans may create.

Sacramento mandates that certain items be disposed of in specific ways, but then they don't provide any means for funding the required collection programs. These “bans without plans” (BWOPs) are an ongoing issue for local governments, and costs for associated programs eventually fall to

the solid waste customer or taxpayer to cover.

One idea for alleviating BWOPs, called Product Stewardship, suggests the parties that benefit from the product pay for its collection and disposal. For example, medical sharps (needles, lancets, etc.) are banned from the landfill. Instead of turning to local governments and the general taxpayer to pay for programs, the manufacturers,

retailers and sharps consumers would cover the disposal costs. And, the costs for these programs should be included in the price of the product itself, as are manufacturing, transportation and marketing.

But it may take some time for the state to figure out how to remedy the BWOP problem, and most people

really do want to do the right thing if given the opportunity. Here in Central County, Allied Waste Services and the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority are concerned about the potential hazards associated with used medical sharps. They have partnered with various municipal organizations to provide collection sites.

You can visit www.wastediversion.org or call 925-906-1801 for updates on the program, or to get information on a sharps mail-back program.

Some very important items:

■ Make sure your sharps are contained in an authorized sharps container before placing them in the collection receptacle. For more information on containers, check out www.bd.com/us/diabetes/.

■ The host organizations

listed above are going out of their way to help their communities. Therefore, do not, under any circumstances, leave sharps, medications or any other products on their property. Doing so could jeopardize the viability of these collection programs that help our residents do the right thing.

■ These sharps collection programs are for individuals only. Use by residential care facilities, doctors' offices, veterinarians, and other commercial generators are not permitted.

For more information on Product Stewardship, visit: www.calpsc.org.

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