

E-waste makes up more than a third of material violations at Metro landfills

Cardboard, green waste and recyclable mattresses appear less often

BY BRIAN MORTON, VANCOUVER SUN APRIL 10, 2014



Electronic waste — or e-waste — accounted for 35 per cent of the recyclable materials cited for violations during inspections at Metro Vancouver waste facilities in 2013, up from 20 per cent in 2010.

Photograph by: MARK MAKELA, NYT

Metro Vancouver residents and commercial trash haulers don't seem to be getting the message that electronic waste and leftover paint are not allowed in our landfills.

Electronic waste — or e-waste — accounted for 35 per cent of the recyclable materials cited for violations during inspections at Metro Vancouver waste facilities in 2013. That's up from 20 per cent in 2010.

Paint also showed a sharp rise over the three-year period, from one per cent of violations in 2010 to 10 per cent in 2013. Oil rose from two per cent in 2010 to four per cent in 2013.

The figures were in a report presented Thursday to the Greater Vancouver Regional District's Zero Waste Committee, of which Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie is chairman.

"There was no cause for alarm, but it does highlight the distance we still have to go to meet our diversion targets," Brodie said.

"We're working very hard to increase the diversion of waste in many different ways, through recycling, reduction and all the other ways," added Brodie, saying no recommendations were made or actions taken Thursday because the committee received the report for information only.

"We've still got a long way to go, but as a region we're around the 58-per-cent waste diversion mark and we want to get to 70 per cent by next year."

The report, by Solid Waste Services project engineer Brandon Ho, had some encouraging figures, too. Materials other than paint, oil and e-waste showed a corresponding drop in violations: cardboard went from 30 per cent of violations in 2010 to 18 per cent in 2013; green waste from eight per cent to two per cent; gypsum from five per cent to three per cent; plastic and paper from two per cent to one per cent; and recyclable mattresses from 18 per cent in 2011 to 10 per cent in 2013.

Because of that corresponding drop, Brodie noted that the actual levels of e-waste sent to landfills has stayed about the same — only the percentage has gone up. "(The report) shows the percentage of electronic waste is going up because other materials are going down.

"The amount stays the same."

E-waste can include items such as audio-visual equipment, cellphones, fluorescent lamps and appliances.

The report also noted that in 2013, 18.7 per cent (156,432) of the inbound loads to Metro Vancouver facilities were inspected and 5,857 failure notices were issued, a 3.7-per-cent violation rate.

That compares with a 3.2-per cent violation rate in 2012, a 2.9-per-cent violation rate in 2011 and a 3.6-per cent violation rate in 2010.

It showed that the violation rate for inspections of commercial haulers was 8.9 per cent, municipalities 3.4 per cent, and residential drop-off 0.6 per cent.

Inspectors charge a surcharge of \$50 to \$500 to those who show up at the landfill wanting to dump recyclable waste.

The total value of surcharges levied was \$454,000, with the cost of the inspections contract \$452,000. "On this basis, the material inspection program operated on an approximately cost neutral basis," the report said.

Meanwhile, The Vancouver Sun reported earlier this year that Metro Vancouver penalized 17 waste haulers about \$350,000 for delivering trash to regional solid-waste facilities that contained banned items ranging from corrugated cardboard to yard trimmings and electronics.

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