

Correct disposal of hazardous waste should be promoted

Household hazardous waste is a waste stream which should not end up on a landfill site as it is potentially extremely harmful to the environment and citizens' health.



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Dr Suzan Oelofse, president of the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA), says with dwindling landfill airspace and higher environmental consciousness, the correct disposal of waste items has become more important than ever in South Africa.

With the growing supply of buy-back centres and kerbside collection facilities, South Africa is moving towards separation at source to ultimately reduce pressure on landfill sites and to promote better waste disposal practices.

Household hazardous waste is one waste stream that can potentially have a very negative effect on the environment, not to mention human health. These items include electronic waste, batteries, CFL light bulbs, health care waste which includes syringes and old medicines, paint, pesticides and oil.

Drop-off facilities

There is unfortunately no 'one-size fits all' solution to hazardous waste. "A number of retailers already provide drop-off facilities for batteries, e-waste and light bulbs," Dr Oelofse says. "Pick n Pay, Spar, Woolworths, Makro, Builders Warehouse and Incredible Connection stores are just some of these retailers. Some municipalities also provide drop-off facilities at garden sites for this purpose, but not all hazardous waste streams are necessarily accepted."

Oelofse mentions that consumers should also be informed about The Consumer Protection Act which is geared towards protecting consumers. The Act recognises that some consumer goods that have reached the end of its lifecycle may be prohibited from being disposed of in common waste collection systems. "This act places a responsibility on suppliers and producers of consumer goods to implement take-back schemes at no charge to the consumer," she explains.

"There are various recyclers that collect certain hazardous waste streams, so that it can be disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. Consumers should start to separate their waste at source to contribute to a cleaner environment," concludes Oelofse.

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