

# La Crosse County Household Hazardous Materials Program

## 2015 Annual Report to Stakeholders



## Introduction

Household hazardous materials are products that are commonly used in the home, that when discarded may be harmful to human health and/or the environment. Many products found in homes are potentially hazardous materials. They can be corrosive, ignitable, toxic or reactive when handled improperly. Some products present little or no risk when used alone, yet they can be extremely dangerous if mixed together.

The purpose of this report is to keep the stakeholders of the La Crosse County Household Hazardous Materials Program (HHM) informed about its status. The 2015 report includes a description of the programs activities, a discussion of changes that have occurred, an analysis of some of challenges faced and a look ahead to the future.

## Mission, History and Scope

In September of 2001, the Household Hazardous Waste Advisory Panel (HHWAP) to the Solid Waste Committee recommended the formation of a household hazardous waste program, to be housed in a permanent facility at the La Crosse County Landfill. This vision became a reality with the opening of the La Crosse County Household Hazardous Materials (HHM) Program in the fall of 2003. For the last 12 years, the La Crosse County Solid Waste Department has continuously operated the HHM program, accepting household and agricultural hazardous waste from households, farms and qualifying small businesses. The HHWAP envisioned a program that would “effectively remove toxic and dangerous household hazardous wastes from the waste stream in a cost effective manner that is satisfactory to the users and adapts to meet the changing needs of the county’s residents”. Responding to this vision and to the needs of the community, the HHM program has expanded the wastes that it accepts to include e-waste, fluorescent lamps, batteries, oil filters, appliances containing refrigerants (such as Freon), pharmaceuticals, sharps and medical waste.

A 2007 intergovernmental agreement between La Crosse County and the 18 municipalities of the county established funding contributions, in the form of a \$1/capita from each municipality. This is matched by La Crosse County. These contributions provide over half of the programs funding. Because of the funding formula, almost all of the services of the program are free to La Crosse County residents. The current intergovernmental agreement expires at the end of 2017.

In addition, the HHM program annually partners with up to seven neighboring Wisconsin counties to host clean sweep events. These events are funded through a Clean Sweep Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Because the Clean Sweep Grant program scoring system has historically rewarded collaboration between communities, this grant accounted for nearly 25% of HHM’s revenues. Regional cooperation allowed the HHM program to receive a significantly larger grant, benefiting both La Crosse County and its neighboring counties. The awards for the 2016 grant year reflected a change in the scoring system, decreasing the emphasis on regional cooperation. Because of this change and an increase in the number of programs applying for and receiving grants, the HHM programs grant for 2016 was reduced by about 35%. Keeping costs in line in a tight fiscal environment is one of the challenges HHM staff is addressing.



This program also accepts waste generated by businesses that qualify as very small quantity generators (VSQG's) on a fee for service basis. The Wisconsin DNR regulates VSQG's differently than businesses that generate a larger quantity of hazardous waste. Because these small businesses have fewer restrictions regarding disposal of small amounts of hazardous waste and fewer disposal options available to them, accepting waste from VSQG's is a logical extension to the scope of the HHM program. HHM's goal is to provide a cost effective option for small businesses to dispose of wastes that may otherwise be expensive or difficult to dispose of properly.

### **Program Benefits**

The HHM program benefits the community in many ways.

Not all the waste accepted by the HHM program is sent out for disposal. While assuring the proper disposal of hazardous wastes is the first priority, some of the wastes accepted by the HHM program can be reused or recycled. In 2015, over 624,000 pounds of the waste received at the facility was recycled, directly reused or processed into an industrial fuel. This represents 73% of the waste collected.

Included in this figure is 58,000 pounds of usable products that were given back to the community through the Reuse Room. A conservative estimate of the value, to area residents, of these materials is between \$60,000 and \$80,000. The reuse of products saved the HHM program money in avoided disposal costs, benefited the people who were able to use the products and provided a more environmentally sustainable option for these usable materials.

E-waste continues to be a significant contributor to the waste collected. In 2015, the program collected, for recycling, approximately 345,000 pounds of e-waste. Recycling e-waste ensures that valuable, rare materials are recovered and recycled. In Wisconsin, manufacturers are responsible for some of the cost of recycling the electronics that they produce. In the five and one half years since this legislation passed, a viable recycling market for electronics has developed. Increased awareness on the part of the public is one of the reasons the annual total of e-waste collected, by HHM, has more than doubled during this time.

Removing hazardous materials from the waste stream improves the performance of the landfill and the Xcel Waste to Energy facility. When oil based paints and solvents are disposed in the garbage, many will end up being buried in the landfill. Over time, volatile organic compounds and hazardous air pollutants, contained in the paints and solvents, escape into the air. Diverting hazardous waste through the HHM programs, keeps them out of the landfill, eliminating the risk of their release into the environment. Since the inception of the HHM program, there has been a measureable reduction in the emissions of these volatile compounds at the La Crosse County Landfill.

Some household hazardous materials, such as tanks containing compressed gasses, present a safety hazard when delivered to Xcel. Additionally liquid wastes, including latex paint, have a negative impact on Xcel's ability to process burnable waste into refuse-derived fuel.



## Program Utilization

### Household Users

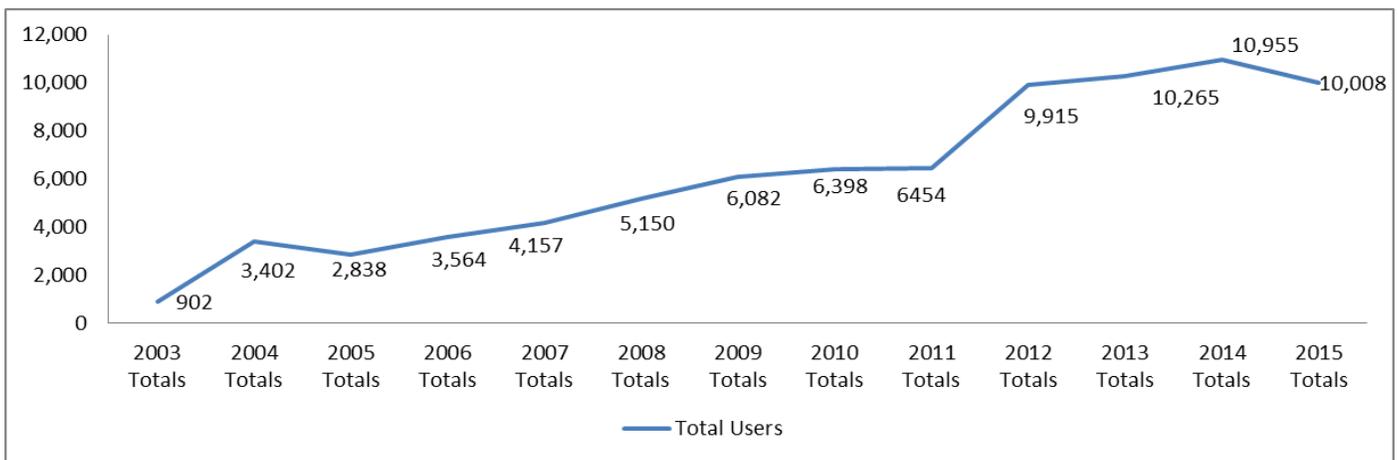
In 2015, participation by household users exceeded the 10,000-user mark for the third consecutive time. Following is the summary of utilization of the program by household users in 2014.

<b><u>2015 La Crosse HHM Facility Utilization Summary (Household Users)</u></b>	
Total Household Users	<b>10,008</b>
Percent Change vs. 2014	<b>-8.6%</b>
Total Weight Collected	<b>639,039lbs</b>
Percent Change vs. 2014	<b>-16.7%</b>

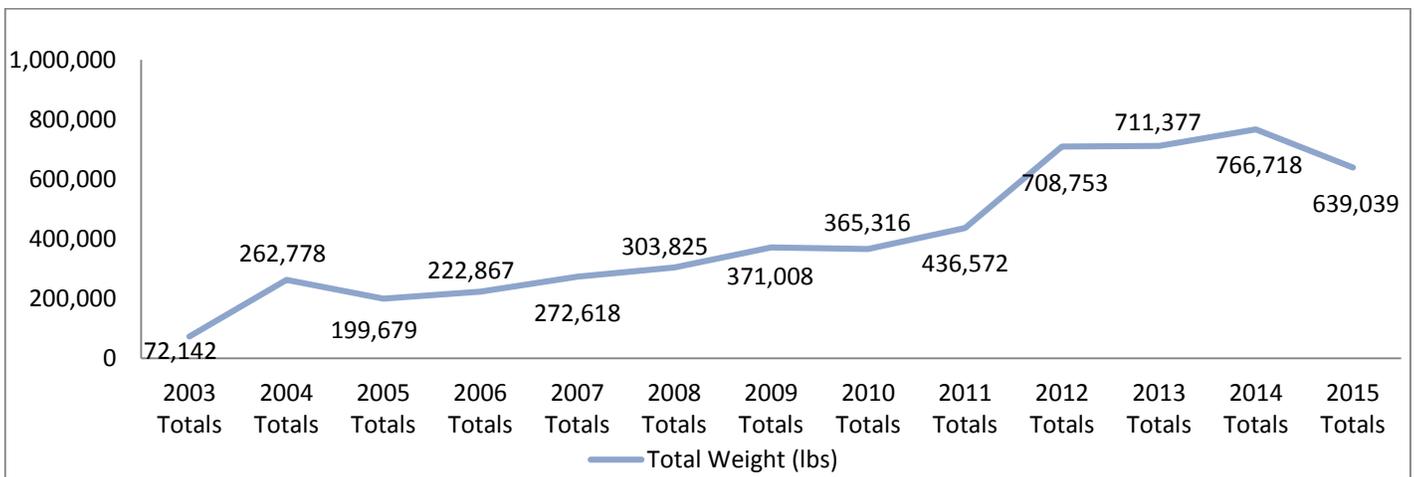
One of the contributors to this decline was a substantial decline in televisions after July 1<sup>st</sup> when a \$10 fee was instituted. This fee became necessary to cover the rising cost of recycling televisions.

The following charts show the programs growth in household users and weight collected respectively.

### Users



### Weight of Waste Collected



The following chart shows the level of participation by the residents of all 18 municipalities in La Crosse County. This data shows that the program is very popular to residents, regardless of where in the county they live; however, the level of participation varies among the county's municipalities.

The column furthest to the right is the ratio of the percent of users from a particular municipality to the percent of the total county's population that reside in that municipality. A higher number means that the residents of that municipality utilize the HHM facility at a higher rate. Conversely, a lower number means the opposite. For example, the Town of Medary has 1.3% of the county's population, yet its residents represented 2.45% of the number of users of HHM; thus the highest user ratio of 1.9.

	<b>2015 Users</b>	<b>2015 % of Total Users</b>	<b>2015 Weight (lbs.)</b>	<b>2015 % of Total Lbs.</b>	<b>% of County Pop.</b>	<b>Ratio %Users: %Pop.</b>
<b>Town of Bangor</b>	77	0.79%	6,873	1.32%	0.5%	1.5
<b>Town of Barre</b>	132	1.35%	9,669	1.86%	1.1%	1.3
<b>Town of Burns</b>	54	0.55%	4,481	0.86%	0.8%	0.7
<b>Town of Campbell</b>	437	4.48%	29,345	5.63%	3.7%	1.2
<b>Town of Farmington</b>	141	1.44%	10,231	1.96%	1.8%	0.8
<b>Town of Greenfield</b>	98	1.00%	6,986	1.34%	1.8%	0.6
<b>Town of Hamilton</b>	184	1.88%	11,852	2.27%	2.1%	0.9
<b>Town of Holland</b>	317	3.25%	25,746	4.94%	3.3%	1.0
<b>Town of Medary</b>	239	2.45%	16,675	3.20%	1.3%	1.9
<b>Town of Onalaska</b>	756	7.74%	54,051	10.37%	4.9%	1.6
<b>Town of Shelby</b>	454	4.65%	30,036	5.77%	4.0%	1.2
<b>Town of Washington</b>	25	0.26%	1,613	0.31%	0.5%	0.5
<b>Village of Bangor</b>	49	0.50%	3,340	0.64%	1.3%	0.4
<b>Village of Holmen</b>	792	8.11%	50,081	9.61%	8.1%	1.0
<b>Village of Rockland</b>	35	0.36%	2,191	0.42%	0.5%	0.7
<b>Village of West Salem</b>	544	5.57%	33,021	6.34%	4.2%	1.3
<b>City of Onalaska</b>	1,773	18.16%	90,260	17.33%	15.6%	1.2
<b>City of La Crosse</b>	3,656	37.45%	134,527	25.82%	44.6%	0.8
	<b>9,763</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>520,978</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

While use of the program varies by municipality, this chart clearly shows that a large number of La Crosse County residents take advantage its services. The convenient location (close to Valley View



Mall) and amount of walk-in hours (average of 21.5 per week) open to the public are two reasons for HHM's ability to continue to provide quality service to a large proportion of the county residents.

Informing the public about the programs that are available is an on-going point of emphasis. Department staff continue to look for ways to inform the public about the program. Utilization of social media such as Facebook and improvements to the HHM website, provide more information and in a more user friendly manner.

**Business Users**

The HHM program charges a fee to the qualifying small businesses (VSQGs) to cover the cost of disposal services. While these fees help to cover some of the fixed costs of the program, they are set at a level to cover the costs associated with providing the service, yet not at a high enough level to provide a substantial subsidy to other parts of the HHM program. The VSQG program provides disposal services for wastes that businesses, because of the small volume, find difficult to dispose of in a cost effective manner. Rather than compete directly with other disposal companies, HHM's goal is to fill the gaps in service for small businesses in the La Crosse area.

<b><u>2015 La Crosse HHM Facility Utilization Summary (VSQG Users)</u></b>	
Total VSQG Users	<b>482</b>
Percent Change vs. 2014	<b>-4%</b>

**Clean Sweeps**

Last year the La Crosse HHM program collaborated with six Wisconsin Counties: Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon and Houston County in Minnesota. HHM staff traveled to locations in these counties and set up one or two day collection events. The waste is collected, sorted, packaged, inventoried and transported back to the HHM facility for further processing. The terms of the DATCP Clean Sweep grant specify that these collections are open to all residents of the participating county and to agricultural businesses within that county. HHM staff provided clean sweep services to Houston County, Minnesota on a fee for service basis.

Following is the 2015 Clean Sweep Summary.

<b><u>2015 La Crosse County Clean Sweep Summary</u></b>	
Counties Served:	7
Number of Collections:	11
Weight Collected:	55,823 lbs.
Participants:	1,660

**Medication Collection**

The addition of permanent drop-off boxes at seven county law enforcement agencies and changes to Drug Enforcement Agency's medication handling regulations, resulted in the 2/21/2015 medication



collection being the last one offered by HHM and its partners. HHM staff continues to work closely with the law enforcement agencies to ensure proper disposal of the medications that are collected.

HHM continues to accept non-controlled medications, sharps and other medical waste from residents and businesses.

### **Continued Emphasis on Educating the Public**

HHM staff believes that an important part of its mission is to educate the public regarding household hazardous materials. In 2015 over 25 groups toured the facility. Each group saw the operation and learned more about safe handling and disposal of the household materials that they encounter every day. Another area of continued emphasis is safe handling and transportation of household hazardous materials. In addition to using media, publications and handouts staff have the opportunity to interact directly with facility users on a daily basis. This one-on-one contact continues to be one of the most valuable educational tools available to the program.

### **Future Funding of the HHM Program**

The current funding agreement between La Crosse County and the 18 municipalities expires December 31, 2017. Because of schedule of the budget approval process, a decision on a future funding formula for the HHM program needs to be made no later than the summer of 2017. The Solid Waste Department is gathering information and formulating plans to have discussions regarding the level of service desired by the residents of La Crosse County and what is the best way to pay for these services.

Funding levels for the program have remained unchanged since the current agreement was implemented in 2007. Because of increased costs associated with inflation and program growth have resulted in HHM having to use its reserves to fill the funding gap each year since 2013. Two drivers of the deficits, was the need to add an additional full time technician to handle the increase in program utilization and the increased costs for disposal of more wastes. Cost management activities undertaken by HHM staff in 2015 included increasing the amount of material placed into the Reuse Room, more closely screening users to identify landlords and other small businesses which are VSQGs who are required to pay for the service and continuing to look for additional wastes that can be recycled instead of being disposed. The charge for televisions instituted in July of 2015 helped to offset the rising cost of recycling of leaded glass from older televisions.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the continued high level of participation by County residents, businesses and residents of our clean sweep partner's counties, the Household Hazardous Materials program remains a popular and necessary service to the people in this area.

The programs staff continue strive to provide a program that would "effectively remove toxic and dangerous household hazardous wastes from the waste stream in a cost effective manner that is satisfactory to the users and adapts to meet the changing needs of the county's residents", as HHWAP envisioned.

As always, the HHM staff appreciates feedback from its customers and stakeholders.



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**Web Site:** <http://www.lacrossecounty.org/SolidWaste/hhm.asp>

**Front Cover:**

Greg Smith weighing a box of fluorescent lamps, Kim Tiber sorting paint, the HHM mobile collection trailer, Kirk Hackbarth and Greg bulking pesticides in full protective gear, and fully stocked shelves in the Reuse Room.

