

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



# Environmental News

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## EPA PROPOSES RECYCLED WASTE AS ENERGY SOURCE FOR GAS PRODUCTION AND POWER GENERATION

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As part of an EPA initiative to promote flexible, innovative ways to recycle more wastes while reducing the nation's reliance on fossil fuels, the Agency has proposed an action signaling a shift in manufacturing from waste management to productive recycling and resource conservation. The proposal would conserve natural resources by supplementing crude oil sources in electricity production, petroleum refining and chemical manufacturing.

"Today's action is a step forward for the environment and energy self-sufficiency," said Marianne Lamont Horinko, EPA Assistant Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response. "The Agency's objective is to increase recycling and energy recovery. This proposal encourages recycling of waste materials by lessening the regulatory burden on industry, while protecting public health and the environment. Today's announcement is the first in a series of Agency initiatives on this issue, with more to be announced later this spring."

Specifically, EPA is proposing to allow certain hazardous byproduct materials to be processed with gasification technology, in order to produce a clean, safe source of power generation. This promotes increased energy efficiency while reducing the volume of hazardous waste that would otherwise be treated and disposed of on land.

Gasification is a technology that puts coal and other carbon-containing materials under high temperature and pressure to convert them into synthetic gas. This gas is then used as a fuel to generate electricity or steam, or as a basic chemical building block for many uses in the petrochemical and refining industries. When used as a fuel, the synthetic gas, or "syngas," is cleaner than almost any fuel in use today and is comparable to natural gas. In the petroleum refining industry alone, up to seven to 10 million tons of hazardous byproducts currently managed under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) could be transferred to gasification systems.

EPA's proposal would exclude from hazardous waste regulations petroleum refining byproducts and possibly other industry byproducts provided certain conditions are met. These materials would be processed, along with fossil fuels such as coal, petroleum, coke, and possibly municipal solid waste and sewage sludge, to produce a synthetic gas. Processors would have to meet certain conditions to make sure the byproduct materials are handled carefully and that the syngas meets stringent purity standards.

Other related activities to be announced this spring include waste minimization strategies, additional energy recovery projects and a retail initiative targeted towards consumers.

For further information go to: <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/index.htm>. For additional information or to order documents, call the RCRA Call Center at 1-800-424-9346 or 703-412-9810.

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