

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



## Pay-As-You-Throw Continues to Grow

Charging customers for the waste that they dispose, also known as unit pricing or variable rate pricing, increasingly is becoming a viable option for many communities, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) Program.

PAYT communities charge households for waste collection based on the amount of trash thrown away instead of a flat tax or a monthly fee. Converting trash collection into a utility similar to electricity or

created by more than 50 percent.

Once limited to a few progressive communities, PAYT not only has been established in major cities such as San Jose, Calif., Seattle and Austin, Texas, but it continues to grow nationwide. Currently, 4,139 communities use PAYT programs, which serve 27 million U.S. residents, according to an R.W. Beck,

1998 Solid Waste Survey that was funded by the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA), Silver Spring, Md., and the American Plastics Council (APC), Washington, D.C.

This figure corroborates a 1998 Duke University, Durham, N.C., estimate of more than 3,800 PAYT communities.

States, too, encourage PAYT development. Some have mandates, while others sponsor workshops, develop educational campaigns or participate in the EPA's PAYT events.

For example, Massachusetts' grant program encourages PAYT development through start-up and equipment grants, and grant preference programs.

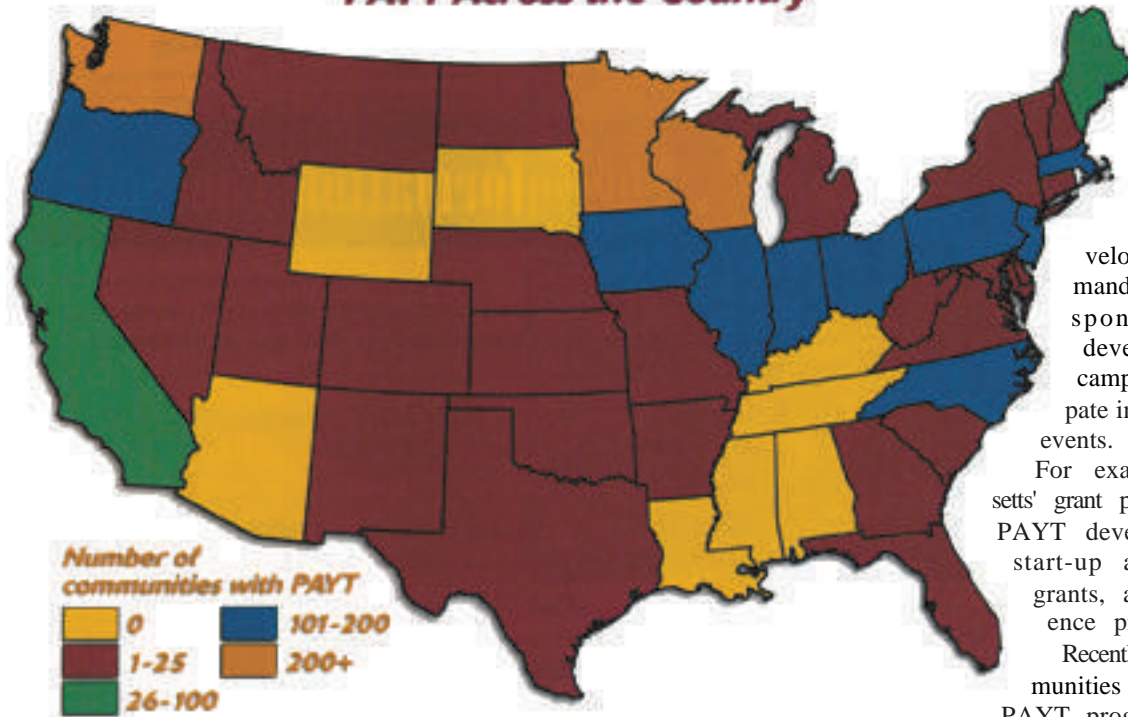
Recently, three new communities have implemented PAYT programs, and seven

more will begin one in 1999. Massachusetts has a goal for 140 PAYT programs by 2000.

PAYT also reduces the greenhouse gas emissions from making, distributing and disposing of products, according to the EPA's "Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Management of Selected Materials in Municipal Solid Waste" report.

The EPA suggests that if 200 more communities with a population of 100,000 adopt PAYT this year and reduce their waste by 20 percent, greenhouse

### *PAYT Across the Country*



gas creates an incentive to recycle more and generate less waste.

On average, PAYT communities reduce their waste from 14 percent to 27 percent and increase recycling from 32 percent to 59 percent, according to the EPA. For instance, shortly after Falmouth, Maine, began its PAYT program in 1992, trash disposal volumes decreased by 35 percent and recycling in-

gas emissions would be reduced by 3.8 million tons of carbon equivalent (MTCE) the standard unit of measure for greenhouse gases. This is similar to taking 2.8 million cars off the road for one year or protecting 3.8 million acres of well-established, rapidly growing mixed species trees.

In fact, the EPA has designated PAYT as an important component in its Climate Change Initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because it has proven to reduce waste and increase recycling substantially.

Since 1993, the EPA has assisted communities considering PAYT by hosting workshops and presentations, and awarding grants. In addition, EPA has developed educational tools, including a Tool Kit, fact sheets and case studies of other programs.

The EPA also recently completed a two-part video entitled "Pay-As-You-Throw: A New Trend in Sustainable Solid Waste Management." The first, which can be used in town meetings and city council presentations to introduce communities to the unit-based pricing concept, provides a 15-minute overview of PAYT's concept and benefits.

The second tape, which is designed for recycling coordinators and municipal solid waste (MSW) planners, analyzes the issues to consider when developing a PAYT program. This module runs for one hour.

EPA also is developing "Rate Structure Design: Setting Rates for a Pay-As-You-Throw Program," a brochure to help communities determine PAYT rates that reflect the cost of their MSW services. In the past few years, more than 2,000 communities have requested information on PAYT and more than 6,000 people have participated in EPA PAYT workshops and video conferences.

For more information on EPA's PAYT grant program or tools, call toll-free: (888) EPA-PAYT. Tools also are available on the EPA's website: [www.epa.gov/payt](http://www.epa.gov/payt)

— Gordon Hui Jr.

*U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Pay-As-You-Throw Program  
Washington, D.C.*