What do experts say about EPA's recycling measurement method?

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"No question it helps."

"We've been pleased with every aspect."

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Benefits of Measuring Recycling

Presenting a recycling measurement tool that:

- Ensures fair comparisons of recycling rates among states or municipalities.
- Produces useful information for planning and decision-making.
- Provides accurate, up-to-date numbers for market development.
- Allows for easy data collection from the private sector.
- Saves you time and effort.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a voluntary, standard methodology for measuring recycling rates. At present, few state and local governments define recycling in the same way, use the same approach for measuring recycling rates, or include the same materials in their rates. Many find it difficult to obtain complete information from data sources to calculate reliable rates. As a result, the benefits of measuring recycling are often not fully realized. Utilizing this methodology can help you accurately evaluate the success of your program and ensure that your fiscal, administrative, and planning decisions are sound.

The Methodology

The standard methodology was developed with input from state and local governments and the private sector. It addresses the key issues encountered by those who undertake recycling measurement. It is flexible and completely voluntary.

The methodology consists of six core (required) elements and a number of recommended (flexible) elements. For example, state and local governments that decide to use the methodology must use a standard recycling rate equation, a standard scope of municipal solid waste (MSW), and a standard definition of recycling. In addition, EPA recommends that users adopt optional survey forms for obtaining information from various data sources, as well as worksheets for compiling data.

Guidance

EPA explains the methodology in detail in its guidance document, Measuring Recycling: A Guide for State and Local Governments. In addition to detailed information on the core and flexible elements, the document provides “real life” examples, planning checklists, helpful hints and tips, a recommended timeline for developing a measurement program, a glossary of more than 100 standard terms, standard volume-to-weight conversion factors, and other useful tools.

Translator

For states or localities that already measure recycling, EPA also provides an abbreviated form of the methodology, known as “the translator,” for those that want to continue using their existing methods. This approach allows states and localities to recalculate their rates according to the EPA method. A simple worksheet included in the guidance document walks states through these steps.

For More Information

See our Web site at http://www.epa.gov/recycle.measure
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