



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Meleesa Johnson-President, Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin (AROW) 715-573-3165; John Welch-President, Solid Waste Association of North America Badger Chapter (SWANA) 608-516-4154; Gerry Neuser, Chairperson-Wisconsin Counties Solid Waste Management Association (WCSWMA) 920-683-4307; Roxanne Wienkes, Coalition Coordinator 608-509-6681

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS FORM COALITION TO TACKLE SOURCES OF PFAS

Solid waste management professionals from around the state are meeting to take on the challenge of PFAS-contaminated wastes entering their facilities. These facilities- landfills, compost facilities and recycling facilities- receive PFAS-contaminated wastes when consumers and industry dispose of unwanted items. All of these solid waste facilities have a primary mission with society's waste: to protect human health and the environment.

Per- and poly-fluorinated compounds, commonly referred to as PFAS, are a group of over 5000 compounds created and used by industry since the 1950s. Since that time, PFAS have been used in abundance in household products like Teflon[®], Scotchguard[®], personal care items such as lotions, hair conditioners and deodorants, waterproof clothing and footwear, stain-free carpets, and many other household items. PFAS are also used in food packaging, including wrappers for fast food. As well, PFAS are used in fire-fighting foams because of their ability to withstand heat and not breakdown in the presence of water.

“These compounds are everywhere and in every house,” said Gerry Neuser, chairperson of the Wisconsin Counties Solid Waste Management Association. In fact, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services has indicated the primary exposure pathway for children is from household dust. The primary exposure route for adults is food.

As the DNR works to develop sampling methods and standards for groundwater, surface water and solids, they are also identifying sources of PFAS. Solid waste facilities have been targeted as a source of PFAS. However, waste management leaders see things differently.

“We are not sources of PFAS. Plain and simple...we are receivers of PFAS waste!” says Meleesa Johnson, president of Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin. Johnson adds that unless people change their consumption habits and demand that PFAS are no longer used in their food packaging and clothing, we will continue to be receivers of PFAS.



The waste management industry would like to see true source reduction, not just a patchwork of regulatory standards, non-standardized sampling methods and requirements for unproven filtration systems. True source reduction is the elimination of the use of these compounds, not just in the United States but globally.

While the older generation of PFAS, in particular PFOA and PFOS, have been banned in the United States since the early 2000s, these compounds are still produced and used overseas. This means products manufactured outside of the US and sold online or at retail locations may contain the legacy forms of PFAS.

There are concrete examples of how source reduction, through full or partial bans of dangerous products, worked to protect human health and the environment. When chlorofluorocarbons compounds (CFC) were identified as a major contributor to the depletion of the ozone layer, the 1987 Montreal Protocol laid out a framework for reducing or eliminating the production of ozone-depleting compounds. As well, when there became a clear linkage between asbestos and cancer, the Asbestos Ban and Phase-Out Rule (ABPR) of 1989 banned almost all use of asbestos.

John Welch, president of the Solid Waste Association of North America-Badger Chapter, says the waste management industry supports regulating these chemicals and sees protection of human health the environment as a top priority. “We want to make sure that money invested in managing health and environmental risks associated with PFAS will actually net positive outcomes, not just perpetually cycle PFAS from one receiving source to the next.”

Waste management professionals of Wisconsin look forward to helping regulators and legislators tackle the true sources of PFAS.



Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin is a professional association, with members from local government, businesses and non-profit groups, which provides statewide proactive leadership on waste reduction and recycling through education, advocacy, collaboration, programs and services.

Contact: President Meleesa Johnson, (Marathon Co. Solid Waste Director), meleesa.johnson@co.marathon.wi.us 715-446-3101

Solid Waste Association of North America- Badger Chapter has more than 200 members in Wisconsin, providing information, training programs, and networking opportunities to solid waste professionals and sharing ideas and solutions to better manage municipal waste.

Contact: President John Welch, (Dane Co. Waste & Renewables Director), 608-267-8815 Welch@countyofdane.com

Wisconsin Counties Solid Waste Management Association works with all counties to promote effective and environmentally sound waste management systems and resource recovery efforts.

Contact: Chair Gerry Neuser, (Manitowoc County Public Works Director), 920-683-4307 GerryNeuser@co.manitowoc.wi.us