

## FACT SHEET



### INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

## Prevent Illegal Open Dumping

Office of Land Quality – Solid Waste Compliance Section

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[www.idem.IN.gov](http://www.idem.IN.gov)

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### Introduction

- Indiana's open dumping rules (329 IAC 10-4) state, "No person shall cause or allow the storage, containment, processing, or disposal of solid waste in a manner which creates a threat to human health or the environment, including the creating of a fire hazard, vector attraction, air or water pollution, or other contamination."
- Discarding trash or unwanted items anywhere except recycling centers or state permitted landfills, transfer stations, or incinerators is considered open dumping and is illegal.
- Burning waste materials, including household trash, business trash, construction/demolition debris, and dumped waste, is also illegal in Indiana.
- Open dumps may be found on public or private property and are typically located in secluded areas such as woods or ravines, roadways, ditches, river and creek banks, vacant lots, and abandoned sites.
- Dumped waste often includes household building debris, construction and demolition waste, household garbage, appliances, furniture, tires, plastics, cardboard, and hazardous waste—including household hazardous waste (HHW) such as used oil, weed killer, or swimming pool chemicals—that is corrosive, toxic, ignitable, and/or reactive. Some dumpsites may even contain abandoned vehicles or potentially dangerous chemicals and paraphernalia from illegal drug labs (e.g., meth labs).

### Potential Health, Environmental, and Community Impacts

- Physical hazards at open dumps include broken glass, sharp metal, and hypodermic needles that can cause painful injuries; appliances in which children or animals can become trapped; and tires that may catch fire and emit toxic smoke. Illegal drug lab waste can pose immediate threats (i.e., explosions, fires, chemical burns, or vapors).
- Chemical hazards include toxic substances such as antifreeze, paint, pesticides, and mercury from gas appliance pilot light sensors and other products that can be especially hazardous to curious children.
- Biological hazards include:
  - Contaminated medical waste that can cause life-altering diseases (HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis B or C).
  - Household garbage (e.g., food scraps, dirty diapers) that can attract disease-spreading rodents.
  - Discarded tires or other objects that collect standing water and provide breeding areas for mosquitoes that could carry encephalitis or West Nile Virus.
  - Asbestos that can cause lung disease or cancer, depending on the level and length of the exposure.
- Environmental impacts include soil and water contamination, plant and wildlife habitat damage, and depletion of Earth's protective ozone layer when appliances (e.g., air conditioners, refrigerators) release refrigerants into the atmosphere. Pollutants can seep into groundwater, be carried by rainwater to waterbodies, and contaminate drinking water supplies. Engineered liner systems in regulated landfills protect soil and water from contamination when waste is disposed of properly.
- Unightly waste piles can spoil the aesthetic appeal of Indiana's landscape, decrease community quality of life, lower property values of surrounding homes, negatively affect tourism, and cost municipalities money for cleanups.

### How to Prevent Waste and Safely and Legally Dispose of It

- Reduce waste by avoiding disposable items; buying products in bulk, economy size, or concentrated form; and purchasing durable, rechargeable, repairable, and refillable products.
- Reuse products by donating unwanted items and mending or repairing broken items instead of discarding or replacing them. Find a donation center on the internet or ask your solid waste management district (SWMD) about donation centers and charitable organizations that need and accept donated items. SWMDs are listed on the Association of Indiana Solid Waste Management Districts' website at [www.aiswmd.org/page-1630206](http://www.aiswmd.org/page-1630206).
- Recycle by separating recyclable items such as glass, metals, plastics, and paper from your garbage. Contact your SWMD to find a local drop-off site or curbside recycling service.
- Use a municipal or private trash service. Ask your SWMD or local government agency about available options. [MyLocal.IN.gov](http://MyLocal.IN.gov) provides links to local government agency websites (select a county from the dropdown menu).
- Take trash to a permitted solid waste management facility (see IDEM's "Permitted Solid Waste Facilities List" at [www.idem.IN.gov/landquality/2412.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/landquality/2412.htm)) or to a collection container system that is open to the public.

Please follow these additional guidelines:

- **Abandoned Vehicles** – Report an abandoned vehicle to the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the area where it's located. The vehicle may have been stolen, and law enforcement must review all abandoned vehicles. Provide the year, model, make, and license plate number, if possible.
- **Appliances** – Contact your local solid waste management district for assistance with finding a recycler. For additional information, consult U.S. EPA's Responsible Appliance Disposal webpage at [www2.epa.gov/rad](http://www2.epa.gov/rad).
- **Asbestos** – Follow the asbestos disposal guidance for businesses and citizens on the Waste Disposal page of IDEM's Asbestos portal at [www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/2378.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/2378.htm) and utilize these resources, as applicable:
  - Asbestos Removal, Handling, and Disposal Guidance for Homeowners: [www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/2342.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/2342.htm)
  - Regulatory guidance for businesses: [www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/2343.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/2343.htm)
  - IDEM Asbestos fact sheet: [www.idem.IN.gov/4522.htm#oaq\\_compliance](http://www.idem.IN.gov/4522.htm#oaq_compliance)
- **Construction and Demolition Waste** – Follow IDEM's disposal guidance at [www.idem.IN.gov/waste/2412.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/waste/2412.htm). Sustainable management of construction and demolition materials is covered on U.S. EPA's website at [www.epa.gov/smm/sustainable-management-construction-and-demolition-materials](http://www.epa.gov/smm/sustainable-management-construction-and-demolition-materials).
- **Electronic Waste** – It is illegal for Indiana households, public (including charter) schools, and small businesses to dispose of many types of unwanted or broken electronics in the trash. Follow the electronic waste recycling guidance on IDEM's website at [www.idem.IN.gov/recycle/2377.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/recycle/2377.htm).
- **Household Hazardous Waste** – Ask your SWMD if an HHW collection site or tox-away day is available. Follow the guidelines for proper handling and disposal on IDEM's website at [www.idem.IN.gov/health/2452.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/health/2452.htm).
- **Illegal Drug Lab Waste** – If illegal drug lab activity is suspected at an open dump, DO NOT enter or try to clean up the site. Immediately notify the Indiana State Police Meth Tip Line at (800) 453-4756. A list of items to watch for is on the Indiana State Department of Health's website at [www.isdh.IN.gov/26412.htm](http://www.isdh.IN.gov/26412.htm).
- **Infectious Waste** – Follow the safe disposal guidelines for household-generated needles and sharps on IDEM's website at [www.idem.IN.gov/health/2453.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/health/2453.htm). Disposal locations can be found at [safeneedledisposal.org](http://safeneedledisposal.org).
- **Mercury** – Never break or put mercury-containing items in the trash. Properly collect, package, label, and transport them to a mercury drop-off site for recycling or disposal in a permitted hazardous waste disposal facility. See IDEM's Mercury page at [www.idem.IN.gov/health/2332.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/health/2332.htm) for details.
- **Tires** – Recycle or properly dispose of waste tires per IDEM's guidance at [www.idem.IN.gov/recycle/2518.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/recycle/2518.htm).
- **Unwanted Medicine** – Do not flush expired or unwanted medicine down the toilet. Follow the proper disposal guidelines for medicine on IDEM's website at [www.idem.IN.gov/health/2451.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/health/2451.htm).
- **Yard Waste** – Indiana law bans the disposal of yard wastes (greater than three feet in length) from landscaping maintenance or land clearing projects in solid waste landfills. Follow the yard waste management practices on IDEM's website at [www.idem.IN.gov/health/2450.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/health/2450.htm); contact your SWMD about yard waste collection programs; or take yard waste to a composting facility on IDEM's "Registered Yard Waste Composting Facilities" list at [www.idem.IN.gov/landquality/2412.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/landquality/2412.htm).

### Consequences of Open Dumping

Open dumping is an act that disregards the environmental safeguards required by Indiana laws and rules. Open dumping is a class D felony. Violators must pay for the cleanup and properly dispose of dumped waste at a recycling center or state permitted landfill, transfer station, or incinerator.

### How to Report and Prevent Open Dumping

Report open dumping immediately to IDEM's complaint coordinator toll free at (800) 451-6027 (option 3); submit a complaint online at [www.idem.IN.gov/5274.htm](http://www.idem.IN.gov/5274.htm); or print, complete, and mail the IDEM Complaint Form (50014) at [www.idem.IN.gov/5157.htm#agency\\_idem](http://www.idem.IN.gov/5157.htm#agency_idem). Local law enforcement officers may work with state government officials to investigate and prosecute offenders. Publicizing arrests, successfully prosecuting violators, and using U.S. EPA's Illegal Dumping Prevention Guidebook at [www.epa.gov/nscep](http://www.epa.gov/nscep) may help to deter others from open dumping activities.

### IDEM's Role

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management's (IDEM) mission is to implement federal and state regulations to protect human health and the environment while allowing the environmentally sound operations of industrial, agricultural, commercial, and governmental activities vital to a prosperous economy. IDEM's Solid Waste Compliance Section oversees Indiana's solid waste facilities, septage haulers, and septage land application sites, and investigates illegal open dumps.