




A City of Austin Service Department

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor and City Council Members

**From:** Bob Gedert, Director, Austin Resource Recovery Department 

**CC:** Marc A. Ott, City Manager  
Robert D. Goode, Assistant City Manager

**Date:** April 7, 2015

**Subject:** Department Response to Council Requests for Added Household Hazardous Waste Services

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We have received questions from City Council members regarding our existing Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) disposal program and the opportunity for remote HHW Collection Days for each of the 10 City Council districts. Per request, this proposed new service will be discussed at the April 29<sup>th</sup> Open Space, Environment and Sustainability Council Committee meeting.

### Background

#### **Existing Collection Service**

Austin Resource Recovery operates a single Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility at 2514 Business Center Drive in South Central Austin. The facility is open Monday - Friday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday: 7 a.m. to 12:00 Noon.

Items accepted include: Fluorescent bulbs, Batteries (car and household), Cell phones, Household Cleaners, Automotive fluids, Oil filters, Paint and thinners, Pesticides and herbicides, Photographic chemicals, Mercury, Aerosol cans, Pool chemicals, Cooking oil, Outdoor grill propane cylinders.

Items NOT Accepted: Radioactive materials, Syringes or medical waste, Tires, Electronics, Explosive materials, ammunition, Business-generated waste.

We are redesigning the current facility to include a reuse and recycling drop-off center, a new traffic flow pattern, and re-name the combined service facility to better reflect the variety of materials accepted at the site.

#### **Community Input**

Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) held many community meetings in 2010 and 2011 in the development of its Master Plan, and heard dissatisfaction that the HHW facility is inaccessible by residents from the northern half of the city. The February 2015 report from the ETC Institute's City of Austin Community Survey displays a very high citizen satisfaction of ARR services, with one exception; Household Hazardous Waste services received a high *dissatisfaction* rating amongst surveyed citizens.

### **Pilot Collection at Anderson High School**

In 2008, the City of Austin designed a pilot program for a remote, north HHW collection drop off event at Anderson High.

- The response was overwhelming and resulted in traffic backing up for several miles.
- We estimate 800 to 1,000 vehicles were serviced through a 4 – 6 hour collection window, with as many as 500 vehicles giving up on the long wait. This event certainly demonstrated public desire for such collection events.
- We did learn several lessons to help us plan future collection events...consideration of traffic flow, number of un-load lanes, anticipated collection volumes, weather considerations, and clarity of public education regarding location and items accepted.
- The one-day expenses for this event were substantial. The cost of the Anderson High pilot limited further implementation of remote events.

### **New Program - Evaluating Offsite Collection Events**

A collection event designed for remote locations requires intensive planning (see below) and organization to ensure compliance with Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) requirements.

#### **Planning Considerations**

In planning, establishing, and operating a one-day HHW Collection Drive, several factors must be considered:

- Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) requirements, including:
  - Site authorization and a one-day collection permit (TAC 335.409), and a site specific operations plan.
  - 45 day advanced notification to TCEQ prior to the event. This means that event locations should be found, discussed and approved at least two months prior to the collection event,
  - Site Operations Plan approved by TCEQ for each collection event,
  - Public Outreach indicating the acceptable and non-acceptable items for collection, location, and times for the event, as required by TCEQ.
  - Traffic control submittal as part of the TCEQ operations. This plan will require APD officers and trained volunteers. The added costs for police personnel and disposal of controlled substances are not included in the above cost estimate.
- Finding locations large enough to hold such events. In consideration of the traffic overflow from the 2008 Anderson High collection event, staff will need time to search for large parking lots where vehicles can be queued in a line off the public roadway. We estimate 800 to 1,000 vehicles through a 4 – 6 hour collection window. The sites selected for collection must be approved by Austin Police Department and the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality.

#### **Additional Material Types for Collection**

In accordance with Controlled Substances Act, pharmaceutical collection will require involvement of the Austin Police Department. The added costs for police personnel and disposal of controlled substances are not included in the above cost estimate. Paper shredding collection can be provided by a private vendor at no cost to the City. Various paper recyclers provide such service and would enjoy the added public exposure. City policies would require a posted no-cost bid procedure, so the city would avoid preferential treatment to a single service provider.

## Volunteers

An estimated 20-25 volunteer at each collection event would be extremely helpful. However, volunteers cannot unload or handle the delivered household chemicals for liability and safety concerns. Generally, the contractor's staff (see below) will be positioned to handle the material offloading – volunteers are an option to move the traffic faster through the line, provide information to the residents in line, and perform citizen surveys. Pre-training volunteers will aid in better on-site coordination of services and provide better direction to citizens driving through the lines. This could be a community service for scouts, church groups, and environmental clubs. However, the cost for the event will not be reduced substantially from the use of volunteers because of the TCEQ processing and handling requirements.

## Scheduling

Staff recommends avoiding collection in November and December, due to holiday events and traffic concerns. In addition, staff recommends avoiding a collection date that overlaps with South by South West (SXSW) in March and Austin City Limits (ACL) festivals in October, as Austin Resource Recovery staff are dedicated toward litter management at these events.

## Implementation

Staff recommends utilizing contractors to operate the remote Collection Events. Household Hazardous Waste collection events require a Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) site specific operations plan, which will require trained personnel with hazardous materials handling certification. The personnel on site will be required to wear Personal Protective Equipment. Although the Department has trained professionals, we do not have the 30-35 certified staff that will be required to perform the collection, sortation, and packing of the chemicals received. Additionally, staff recommends that the existing permanent facility (2514 Business Center Drive in South Central Austin) be fully operational with city staff on District collection days to address overflow from the District Collection Event.

## Remote Collection Events – Single Event Cost Estimates

Staff provides this cost estimate based on the previous 2008 Anderson High School collection event.

On-Site Contractors	\$25,000 - \$30,000 per collection event	Cost is dependent on site mobilization expenses and the hours of operation. The contracted vendor will supply tractor trailers, roll-off dumpsters, forklifts, drums, cubic yard boxes, safety showers, and personal protective gear.
Disposal / Recycling Expenses	\$40,000 - \$50,000 per collection event	Cost is dependent on the type and the weight of the material collected. (estimate based on 1,000 vehicles)
Public Education and Outreach	\$3,000 per collection event	Public education and outreach to describe the event hours and items qualified to be collected. Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) requires public outreach.
On-Site Incidentals	\$2,000 per collection event	Event tent rental, ice water, and staff supplies, to shield staff and volunteers from the weather.
Traffic Control	Unknown expense	Austin Police Department and Emergency Medical Services will need to be on-site throughout the collection event.
Total Expenses per collection event	\$70,000 – \$85,000 per collection event	<b><i>Currently NOT appropriated in the FY15 Adopted Budget, nor planned to be proposed in the FY16 Budget.</i></b>

A total estimated cost of \$85,000 per event, or \$850,000 for ten district events which would equate to a \$0.20 per month increase on the Clean Community Fee.

**Staff Recommendations**

We believe remote collection events are a great service to our community. Ensuring that these materials are properly disposed is an important value. However, as is the case for many programs, the costs of the events have limited their implementation. Based on the expense of these remote collection events, staff does not recommend launching any events this fiscal year. If the City Council supports this added household chemical collection for the convenience of the citizens, we recommend consideration of this new program in the upcoming budget process so this program can be evaluated alongside other new programs. At this time, ARR has not included the costs of remote HHW collection events in our preliminary budget.

If Council would want to include the costs of this program in the upcoming fiscal year, we recommend one collection event in each geographic fifth of the city, to reduce cost impacts. This option would provide five collection events throughout the year, pairing two adjoining districts together at an estimated cost of \$350,000 to \$425,000 for five collection events. Regardless of the quantity of collection events, staff recommends a rotation of events so that opposite ends of the city are serviced back to back - e.g. District 7 one month, and District 5 the following month, to provide residents with quick access at their half of the city.

**Future North Collection Site**

A new, permanent location will be more cost-effective than implementing remote location collection events. The ARR Master Plan calls for construction of a duplicate northern recycling/reuse drop off center which will also accept home chemicals and other difficult to recycle materials. The projected opening date is 2018.

For more information about this issue, please contact Bob Gedert, ARR Department Director, at 512-974-1926 or at [Bob.Gedert@austintexas.gov](mailto:Bob.Gedert@austintexas.gov)