AWMA
Waste Reduction and Recycling Seminar
April 25, 2014

Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board (SWMCB)
Initiative to Increase Commercial Recycling
Amy Ulbricht, Anoka County and SWMCB
Who is the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board?

• Six Metropolitan Counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington

• Joint Powers Agreement since the early 1990’s.

• Focus is on regional solid waste management policy and programs, communications and outreach, grants and research.
Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan 2010-2030

The Policy Plan prepared by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency sets MSW Management System Objectives for SWMCB.

• By 2015:
  – Recycling: 45-48% (currently 41%)

• By 2030:
  – Recycling: 54-60%
Regional Policy and Programs: Commercial Recycling Initiative

SWMCB commissioned Skumatz Economic Research Associates (SERA) to do a commercial recycling (cost and billing) study, asking:

• What is holding back commercial recycling? (We have a State target to reach 60% in 2030)

• What tools are used by other jurisdictions to increase recycling?

• Researcher’s recommendations for increasing commercial recycling.
Overall Findings from Study

- Trash and recycling typically are not high priorities.
- Trash service is not revisited often.
- Recycling increases costs unless there is a change to container size or frequency of trash collection.
Overall Findings from Study

• Once signed up, haulers rarely revisit a company’s service levels.

• A large portion of businesses do not have direct control over trash and recycling services.

• Invoices are often hard to understand and unclear.
SERA’s Research Methodology

• Interviewed 6 similar jurisdictions.

• Obtained Business Input through:
  o Web based survey
  o Focus groups
  o Interviews and site visits

• Conducted hauler interviews.
Business Input: Surveys

• 5,000 businesses were sent a survey.

• Businesses with 250+ employees were targeted.

• Responses had more businesses with 10 or more employees than in real life distribution.
Survey Findings

• Four hauling companies provide over 65% of the commercial services.

• 58% of businesses contract directly for service.

• 6.7 years is average time with one hauler.

• Majority are unaware of price difference between trash and recycling services.
More Survey Findings

• Majority recycle cardboard and office paper.

• Largest barrier: Not aware of recycling options.

• Most important: Managerial and employee support.

• Willing to pay slightly more for recycling services.
Business Input: 50 Interviews

• Invoices are not transparent.

• Adding recycling usually increases the bill unless trash service is “right sized”.

• Many small businesses can’t right size; Only 20% of haulers have offered to analyze needs and reduce service.

• Outreach businesses would value:
  o Service provider lists
  o Frequently Asked Questions when contracting
  o Case studies
  o Sample contracts
Common Contract Elements

• Most common term is 3 years.
• Contracts automatically renew.
• Written notification required not to renew.
• Liquidated damages are required if you cancel prior to term.
• Information on how to change service levels.
• Haulers can change rates for a variety of reasons (large majority without notice).
  o Changes due to transportation costs, gas prices, tip fees, weight of trash, environmental compliance
Highlights of Invoice Review

• 39 Garbage invoices were reviewed.

• Over 20 lacked:
  o Information on number of containers
  o Information on the size of container
  o Frequency of collection

• Only 3 contained all of these three items.

• Only 1 clearly showed that State Solid Waste Tax was only charged on trash services, not recycling.
## Sample Bill

**Customer:** RICHARDS, RICHTER AND ASSOC  
**Invoice Number:** 00007-51272-33003  
**Invoice Date:** 04/01/2013  
**Account Number:** 6490889-0500-9  
**Due Date:** Due Upon Receipt

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>U/M</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Gallon toter rel rcy paper</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Non-tax fuel/evmt surcharge c</td>
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<td>04/01/13</td>
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<td>County environmental charge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>25.89</td>
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</table>

**Total Current Charges**  
116.91

**Payments Received:**  
- Payment - thank you  
  117.63

**Total Payments Received**  
117.63
Your Invoice Review

• Does your invoice include:
  o Information on number of containers
  o Information on the size of container
  o Frequency of collection

• Does your invoice indicate that the State Solid Waste Tax is charged only on garbage collected?
Business Input: Focus Groups

- Impossible to understand the bill.
- Would like a waste audit.
- Businesses are potentially leaving “a lot on the table”.
- Peer suggestions have value.
- Small businesses in strip malls, for example, would be interested in sharing recycling services.
What Do the Haulers Say: SERA’s interview with 17 Haulers

• Allow the free market to manage and provide services.

• Haulers do “sell” recycling when starting service: some claimed to offer a pricing incentive.

• Haulers put less focus on recycling with existing customers.

• Recycling is less expensive than trash, but is not free.

• Common contract practices:
  o auto-renewals, penalties for cancellation and ability to increase rates often without notice.
SERA’s Key Contract Conclusions

- Require periodic waste audits and “right sizing”.
- Require haulers to inform of recycling availability on their bills.
- Require transparency in billing and taxes.
Post-Study: SWMCB Adopted Four Next Steps

STEP ONE:

Staff engaged haulers in discussions to share SERA Study results and ask for input on:

- What haulers are willing to do to increase commercial recycling.
- What specific changes are haulers willing to implement.
Step 1: Specific Changes Haulers Were Asked For Input On

- Base recycling services required with trash services.
- Waste audits for all customers.
- Standardized bill format.
- Providing Copies of Contracts including Renewal Clauses.
- Joint recycling messaging.
Step 1: SWMCB Staff’s Follow Up with Haulers

- Haulers will provide the services requested by their customers
- They are service providers and will not pressure a customer
- Waste assessment is not often offered to medium or small customers
- Haulers believe their invoices are easy to understand
- Haulers claim software problems limit changes to bills formats
- Haulers want SWMCB to educate on recycling - not help businesses understand contract terms
STEP TWO:

Explore counties’ ability/resources to require consistent hauler invoices and contracts.

• Legal Opinion from the County Attorney is being sought.
SWMCB Next Steps

STEP THREE:

Develop Educational Resources for Businesses

• Develop educational materials for businesses and property managers for bidding and contracting for garbage and recycling services.
STEP FOUR:

Research what has happened to recycling rates in jurisdictions that have mandated commercial recycling.
Communications and Outreach

• **Rethink Recycling®**
  o brand for outreach and educational efforts
  o RethinkRecycling.com: SWMCB’s online “go-to guide for waste & recycling in the Twin Cities” targeting residents and businesses.
    ▪ Business Recycling Guide (BRG) via RethinkRecycling.com/businesses

• **KARE 11’s Great Green Challenge:** first sponsored campaign targeting businesses

• **Green Biz Bulletin:** new e-newsletter for business audience and website visitors
RethinkRecycling.com & BRG

- Launched 2008 and mobile since Nov. 2013
- Almost 300,000 visits to site in 2013
- **Business Recycling Guide**: Find recycling/disposal info by material type, pick-up/drop-off facilities, How-To Guides, etc.
Great Green Challenge (GGC)

• Partnered with KARE 11 on a business-targeted campaign for waste reduction and recycling
• 11-week series from February 5 – April 17, 2013
• 2-minute segments featured each Tuesday during the 5 p.m. newscast with Rethink Recycling commercial and archived on KARE11.com GGC webpage with sponsored links to RethinkRecycling.com.
• Over 1 million viewers
• **Campaign Call to Action**: 39 businesses in the region took our pledge and were contacted by County Staff for assistance.
Green Biz Bulletin

• Quarterly e-newsletter resource for learning how to reduce waste and increase recycling efforts at work
• Launched August 2013, 3 issues to date
• Audience: business owners, management, building managers, recycling coordinators, and any employee that is interested in recycling

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  o Visit rethinkrecycling.com/businesses now on your device OR fill out sign-up sheet before you leave the seminar today
SWMCB’s Current Tasks

• Developing messages for haulers to place on invoices
  o Requested to have message changed quarterly
  o Focus will be to encourage recycling
• Under Consideration:
  o Guidance tools—“what information should be on your trash bill and why?”
  o How to evaluate the cost of hauler services?
  o How your trash contract is renewed or extended and are you paying too much?
  o It is easy to “right size”
  o Customizable labels and posters
THANK YOU!

Questions?