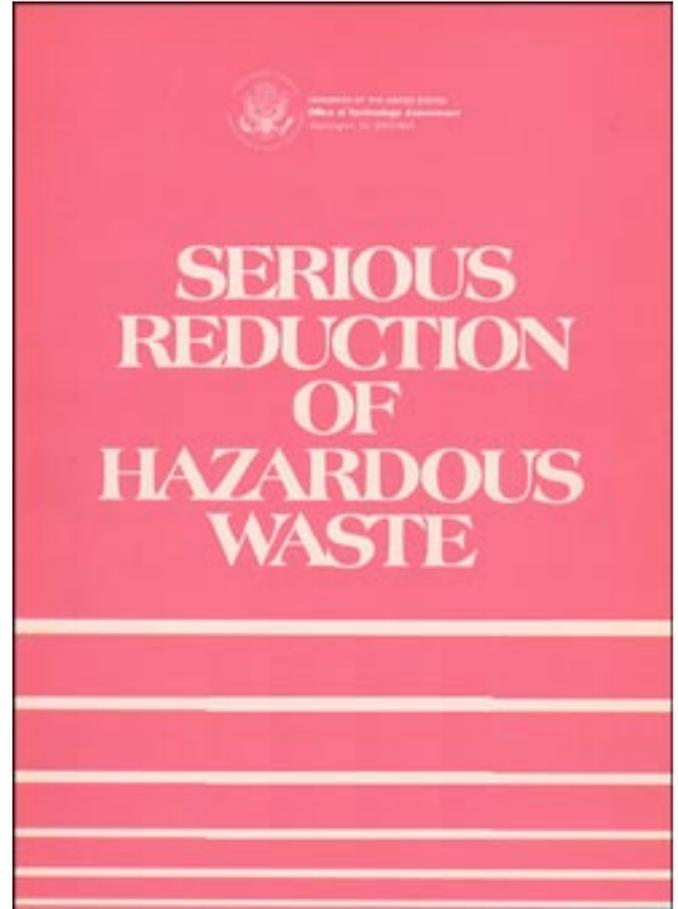


*Serious Reduction of Hazardous Waste: for  
Pollution Prevention and Industrial  
Efficiency*

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## Foreword

Americans are very concerned about hazardous waste. Opinion polls consistently show that the public worries more about hazardous waste than about any other environmental issue. We are constantly reminded of the loss of drinking water supplies from toxic waste contamination, the growing number of hazardous waste sites that must be cleaned up at great expense and with great difficulty, and that we must stop using land disposal for untreated wastes that remain harmful indefinitely,

OTA's first report on hazardous waste in 1983, *Technologies and Management Strategies for Hazardous Waste Control*, was used by Congress to examine the environmental problems and high long-term costs of land disposal practices and the benefits and availability of alternative waste treatment technologies. Congress made substantial use of that analysis in its 1984 amendments to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. In 1985 OTA's second hazardous waste report, *Superfund Strategy* examined the U.S. program to cleanup uncontrolled hazardous waste sites. The report was an effort to shed new light on the scope of the problem and showed how—for environmental and economic reasons—permanently effective cleanup techniques based on waste treatment can replace leaving or redisposing Superfund wastes in the ground. The report also informed the public and assisted Congress in its deliberations on reauthorizing the Superfund program. Currently OTA is completing a study of Wastes in Marine Environments, including incineration in the open ocean.

Now Congress is turning its attention to preventing hazardous waste problems by cutting down on the generation of hazardous waste at its source through innovative engineering and management. The following committees requested the OTA study on waste reduction: Senate Labor and Human Resources, House Energy and Commerce, House Science and Technology, and House Small Business. But while everyone agrees in a philosophical sense that waste reduction is good, there is confusion about definitions and methods and, thus, about what is feasible, *Serious Reduction of Hazardous Waste* examines what is meant by hazardous waste, waste reduction, and even waste reduction technology. The report explores the meaning and consequences of giving primacy to waste *reduction* over waste *management*, and puts waste reduction squarely into the context of industrial production and efficiency, recognizing the current constraints of the American economy. The range of policy options examined is intended to assist what surely will be an extensive policy debate—similar in extent and importance to the energy efficiency debates of the past 15 years,

A broad range of perspectives and a great deal of information on waste reduction were obtained from the advisory panel, several workshop groups, respondents to a survey, and many others who provided information and assistance. OTA thanks them for their time and cooperation. Their participation, however, does not necessarily represent endorsement of the contents of the report, for which OTA bears sole responsibility.



JOHN H. GIBBONS  
Director

## Serious Reduction of Hazardous Waste Advisory Panel

Frank L. Parker, *Chairman*  
Vanderbilt University

Sandy Bihn  
Administrator for the City of Oregon, Ohio

Lisa Bunin  
Greenpeace

Joseph Chu  
General Motors Corp.

Henry S. Cole  
Clean Water Action Project/National  
Campaign Against Toxic Hazards

Peter S. Daley  
Chemical Waste Management, Inc.

Dennis Drolet  
Norchem, Inc.

Harry Fatkin  
Polaroid Corp.

Ken Geiser  
Tufts University

Phil D. Horelick  
Allied Metal Finishing Corp.

Susan Johnnie  
Hewlett Packard Corp.

James Lester  
Colorado State University

Cindy McComas  
Minnesota Technical Assistance Program

James Miller  
Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Management

Marian Mudar  
New York State Environmental Facilities  
Corp.

M.L. (Mort) Mullins  
Monsanto Corp.

James W. Patterson  
Illinois Institute of Technology

David Roe  
Environmental Defense Fund

David Sarokin  
INFORM

Russell H. Susag  
3M

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## OTA Project Staff–Serious Reduction of Hazardous Waste

Lionel S. Johns, *Assistant Director, OTA  
Energy, Materials, and International Security Division*

Audrey Buyn, *Manager  
Industry, Technology, and Employment Program*

Joel S. Hirschhorn, Project **Director**

Kirsten Oldenburg, *Assistant Project Director*

Martha Finnemore, *Research Analyst*

Edna Thompson, *Administrative Assistant*

Joyce Wills, *Secretary*

Elinor Horwitz, *Editor*

### Contractors

David A. Allen

Gary A. Davis

Hampshire Research Associates

Michael Model]

## OTA Workshop—Large Business Perspectives on Hazardous Waste Reduction

Jerry Berger  
Shell Oil

Elliott Berkihiser  
The Boeing Co.

Dick Constable  
SunCo.

Gary Crouth  
Alcoa

David Gordon  
Dow Corning

Khristine L. Hall  
IBM

Edward J. Hessler  
The Upjohn Co.

Susan Johnnie  
Hewlett Packard Corp.

Andy Lampert  
Diamond Shamrock Chemical

Martin B. MacInnis  
GTE Products Corp.

Jerry B. Martin  
Dow Chemical

Nick Odom  
Springs Industries, Inc.

E.E. Sale  
Exxon Chemical Americas

Norman Sealander  
Northrop Corp.

Thomas Sliva  
General Electric

Donald Smith  
Polaroid Corp.

Steve Song  
General Motors Corp.

Anthony Spinola  
U.S. Steel Corp.

Russell H. Susag  
3M

## OTA Workshop—Small and Medium-Sized Business Perspectives on Hazardous Waste Reduction

David Anzures  
California Technical Plating  
California

Peter Bohlmann  
Nordic Ware  
Minneapolis

Harry DeSoi  
Pioneer Metal Finishing  
New Jersey

Dennis Drolet  
Norchem  
Illinois

Rudolph C. Gabel  
Sybron Corp.  
New York

Robert Hall  
ESAB North America, Inc.  
Colorado

Richard C. Herring  
The Gloucester Co.  
Massachusetts

Paul Hoffman  
Garden Way, Inc.  
New York

Phil Horelick  
Allied Metal Finishing  
Maryland

Jim Hornburg  
The Dexter Corp.  
New York

John McInerny  
Cambridge Plating  
Massachusetts

George McRae  
Stanadyne, Inc.  
North Carolina

Cort G. Platt  
Precious Metals Platers  
Minnesota

Russell Smith  
Salsbury Laboratories  
Iowa

## OTA Workshop–State Activities in Waste Reduction

William C. Arble  
Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program

Susan Boyle  
New Jersey Hazardous Waste Commission

Robert M. Confer  
New Jersey Department of Environmental  
Protection

Lee Dane  
Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Management

Frederick L. Doll  
Illinois Hazardous Waste Research and  
Information Center

A.J. Englande  
Tulane University  
Louisiana

Joseph M. Flynn  
Connecticut Department of Economic  
Development

Rebecca Fricke (consultant)  
Tennessee Department of Economic &  
Community Development

Gary E. Hunt  
North Carolina Pollution Prevention Pays  
Program

Bob Laughlin  
Ontario Research Foundation  
Canada

Linda Little  
Governor's Waste Management Board  
North Carolina

Kate Quigley Lynch  
Connecticut Hazardous Waste Management  
Service

Tom Lynch  
New York Department of Environmental  
Conservation

Suzanne Mager  
Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Quality Engineering

Cindy McComas  
Minnesota Technical Assistance Program

George Miller  
University of Louisville  
Kentucky

Marian Mudar  
New York Environmental Facilities Corp.

Ruth Neff  
Tennessee Safe Growth Team

Roger N. Schecter  
North Carolina Pollution Prevention Pays  
Program

William M. Sloan  
Maryland Hazardous Waste Facilities Siting  
Board

Benjamin Smith  
Tennessee Safe Growth Team

Jim Solyst  
National Governor's Association

T. Michael Taimi  
Kentucky Department for Environmental  
Protection

Clifton J. Van Guilder  
New York Department of Environmental  
Conservation

Valerie Wickstrom  
Kentucky Natural Resources &  
Environmental Protection Cabinet

Harry Williams  
Indiana Department of Environmental  
Management

Tom Yates  
Tennessee Division of Solid Waste  
Management

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Richard C. Bird  
Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Quality Engineering

Lee Dane  
Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Management

Dana Duxbury  
Tufts University

B.M. McDuff  
DSH Association

Robert B. Pojasek  
Chas. T. Main, Inc.

Margaret Rogers  
The Society of the Plastics Industry

Roger N. Schecter  
North Carolina Pollution Prevention Pays  
Program

Stuart H. Vaughn  
Ford Motor Co.