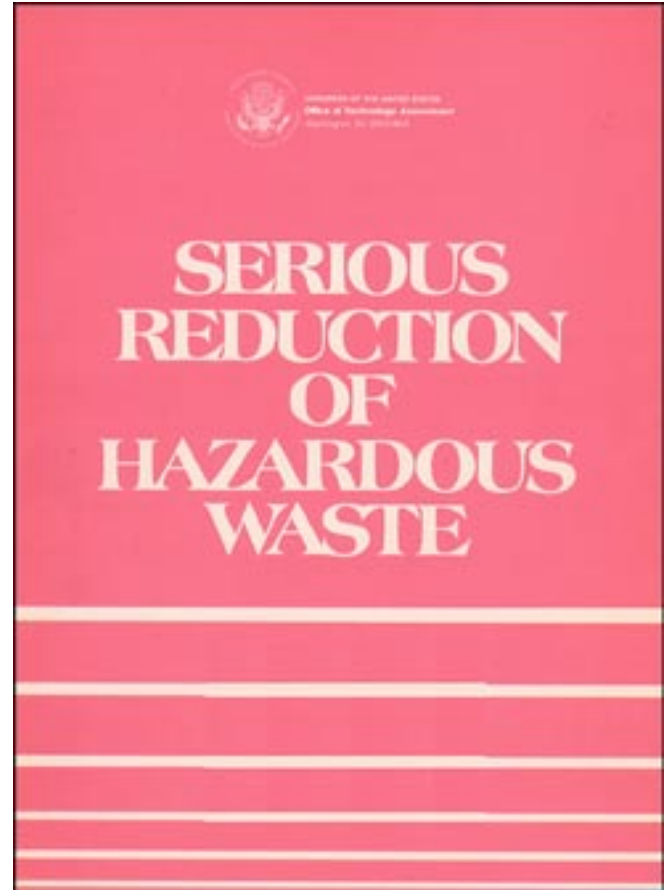


*Serious Reduction of Hazardous Waste: for
Pollution Prevention and Industrial
Efficiency*

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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 redispersing 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.



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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the advisory panel members. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

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