



Waste Terminology

- **AEROBIC:** Requiring air or oxygen; used in reference to decomposition processes that occur in the presence of oxygen
- **AIR POLLUTION:** The introduction of chemicals, particulate matter or biological materials that cause harm or discomfort to humans or other living organisms, or damages the natural environment, into the atmosphere. The atmosphere is a complex, dynamic natural gaseous system that is essential to support life on planet Earth. Stratospheric ozone depletion due to air pollution has long been recognized as a threat to human health as well as to the Earth's ecosystems.
- **ALTERNATIVE FUELS:** Also known as non-conventional or advanced fuels, are any materials or substances that can be used as fuels, other than conventional fuels. Conventional fuels include: *fossil fuels* (petroleum (oil), coal, propane, and natural gas), and nuclear materials such as uranium. Some well-known alternative fuels include biodiesel, bioalcohol (methanol, ethanol, butanol), chemically stored electricity (batteries and fuel cells), hydrogen, non-fossil methane, non-fossil natural gas, vegetable oil and other biomass sources.
- **ANAEROBIC:** Not requiring air or oxygen; used in reference to decomposition processes that occur in the absence of oxygen
- **BIOCHEMICAL OXYGEN DEMAND (BOD):** A chemical procedure for determining the uptake rate of dissolved oxygen by the biological organisms in a body of water. It is not a precise quantitative test, although it is widely used as an indication of the quality of water.
- **BIOFUEL:** The fuel produced by the chemical and/or biological processing of biomass. Biofuel will either be a solid (e.g. charcoal), liquid (e.g. ethanol) or gas (e.g. methane).
- **BIOSOLIDS:** Nutrient-rich organic materials derived from wastewater solids (sewage sludge) that have been stabilized through processing.
- **CARBON DIOXIDE:** A gas with the chemical formula CO₂; It is a gas at standard temperature and pressure and exists in Earth's atmosphere in this state. CO₂ is a trace gas being only 0.038% of the atmosphere. Carbon Dioxide is the most abundant greenhouse gas emitted from fossil fuels.
- **CARBON FOOTPRINT:** The total set of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused by an organization, event or product. For simplicity of reporting, it is often expressed in terms of the amount of carbon dioxide, or its equivalent of other GHGs, emitted.
- **CARBON-NEUTRAL:** Adjective describing buildings or operations that produce no net contribution to carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions.
- **CHEMICAL OXYGEN DEMAND (COD):** Test commonly used to indirectly measure the amount of organic compounds in water. Most applications of COD determine the amount of organic pollutants found in surface water (e.g. lakes and rivers), making COD a useful measure of water quality.

- **CHLOROFLUOROCARBON (CFC):** A **CFC** is an organic compound that contains carbon, chlorine, and fluorine. Most commonly, the term refers to a family of volatile derivatives of methane and ethane. Many CFCs have been widely used as refrigerants, propellants (in aerosol applications), and solvents. The manufacture of such compounds is being phased out by the Montreal Protocol because they contribute to ozone depletion
- **CLIMATE CHANGE:** A change in weather over time and/or region; usually relating to changes in temperature, wind patterns and rainfall; although may be natural or anthropogenic (man made) it generally refers to anthropogenic global warming.
- **COGENERATION:** Also called combined heat and power (CHP), is the use of a heat engine or power station to simultaneously generate both electricity and useful heat.
- **COMPOST:** The aerobically decomposed remnants of organic matter.
- **COMPOSTING:** The biological decomposition of organic materials in the presence of oxygen that yields carbon dioxide, heat and stabilized organic residues that may be used as a soil additive.
- **CONSUMPTION:** The use of resources by a living system, the inflow and degradation of energy that is used for system activity.
- **ECOLOGY:** The scientific study of living organisms and their relationships to one another and their environment; the scientific study of the processes regulating the distribution and abundance of organisms; the study of the design of ecosystem structure and function.
- **ECOSYSTEM:** A dynamic complex of plant, animal and microorganism communities and their non-living environment all interacting as a functional unit.
- **FOSSIL FUELS:** Also called **mineral fuels** are fuels formed by natural resources such as anaerobic decomposition of buried dead organisms.
- **GREEN:** Like 'eco' - a word frequently used to indicate consideration for the environment.
- **GREEN POWER:** Electricity generated from clean, renewable energy sources (such as solar, wind, biomass and hydro power) and supplied through the grid.
- **GREEN PRODUCTS:** Products or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose.
- **GREEN WASTE:** Biodegradable waste that can be composed of garden or park waste, such as grass or flower cuttings and hedge trimmings, as well as domestic and commercial food waste.
- **GREENHOUSE EFFECT:** The heating of the surface of a planet or moon due to the presence of an atmosphere containing gases that absorb and emit infrared radiation.
- **GREENHOUSE GASES:** Gases in an atmosphere that absorb and emit radiation within the thermal infrared range. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect. The main greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone. Greenhouse gases greatly affect the temperature of the Earth; without them, Earth's surface would be on average about 33 °C (59 °F) colder than at present.

- **GLOBAL WARMING:** The observed increase in the average temperature of the Earth's near-surface air and oceans, and its projected continuation. The cause is an increase in carbon dioxide emissions, primarily from the combustion of carbon (fossil) fuels and other greenhouse gases
- **KYOTO PROTOCOL:** Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or FCCC), aimed at combating global warming. The UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty with the goal of achieving "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system."
- **LANDFILL:** Also known as a dump or rubbish dump, is a site for the disposal of waste materials in which refuse is buried between layers of soil and is the oldest form of waste treatment. Historically, landfills have been the most common methods of organized waste disposal and remain so in many places around the world.
- **METHANE:** Chemical compound with the chemical formula CH₄. It is the simplest alkane, and the principal component of natural gas.
- **MONTREAL PROTOCOL:** The Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer (a protocol to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer) is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of a number of substances believed to be responsible for ozone depletion.
- **NATURAL GAS:** A gas consisting primarily of methane. It is found associated with fossil fuels, in coal beds, as methane clathrates, and is created by methanogenic organisms in marshes, bogs, and landfills. It is an important fuel source, a major feedstock for fertilizers, and a potent greenhouse gas
- **NITROUS OXIDE:** Commonly known as happy gas or laughing gas, is a chemical compound with the chemical formula N₂O. Nitrous oxide is a potent greenhouse gas produced primarily in agriculture, particularly by the livestock sector.
- **POTABLE:** Safe to drink.
- **RECYCLING:** Recycling involves processing used materials into new products to prevent waste of potentially useful materials, reduce the consumption of fresh raw materials, reduce energy usage, reduce air pollution (from incineration) and water pollution (from landfilling) by reducing the need for "conventional" waste disposal, and lower greenhouse gas emissions as compared to virgin production.
- **RENEWABLE ENERGY:** Energy generated from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, and geothermal heat, which are renewable (naturally replenished).
- **REUSE:** To use an item more than once.
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** The capacity to endure. In ecology, the word describes how biological systems remain diverse and productive over time. For humans it is the potential for long-term maintenance of wellbeing, which in turn depends on the wellbeing of the natural world and the responsible use of natural resources.
- **TOTAL SUSPENDED SOLIDS:** A water quality measurement usually abbreviated **TSS**. It measures the dry-weight of particles trapped by a filter, typically of a specified pore size.

- **WASTE:** Any material (liquid, solid or gaseous) that is produced by domestic households and commercial, institutional, municipal or industrial organizations, and which cannot be collected and recycled in any way for further use. For solid wastes, the term may describe materials that currently go to landfills, even though some of the material is potentially recyclable.
- **ZERO WASTE:** Turning waste into resource; the redesign of resource-use so that waste can ultimately be reduced to zero; ensuring that by-products are used elsewhere and goods are recycled, in emulation of the cycling of wastes in nature.