

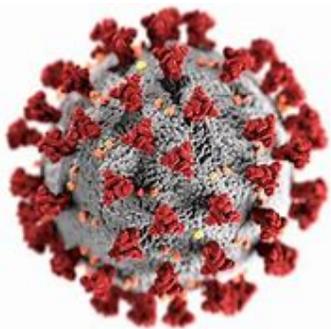
Dealing with COVID's Aftermath

H-GAC Solid Waste Workshop Series
Cheryl Burton Fentress – Harris County HHW Program Manager
February 24, 2022



Discussion for today:

- Changes HHW programs have encountered the last 2 years
- COVID brought both positive and negative changes
- Now we are experiencing supply chain problems
- How we can work together to alleviate some of the stress



POLL QUESTION

**Do you currently have an HHW Program
and if so what type?**

COVID Tuesday, March 17, 2020

The day we temporarily closed to the public

- We were advised the Harris County HHW Facility would be closing temporarily
- We had approximately 3 – 4 hours to complete closing procedures
- We were getting ready to ship waste that Friday
- We had a lot to do before we could call the facility “Temporarily Closed”
- If you did not have to close your facility, I would suggest making a checklist of things you will need to have completed in the event you ever have to go through this
- We had no idea when we would be back



Tuesday, September 15, 2020

The day the facility reopened to the public

- We temporarily closed at the beginning of our new Fiscal Year
- We called other facilities and listened to their experiences
- We added 2 additional days open to the public during the week
- We became a “by appointment only” facility
- We wrote a Reopening Protocol and created a COVID HHW Training Program all via Teams Chat!
- Had to make changes to the layout of the facility
- Everyone was retrained before opening
- Could not use microwave, water coolers, refrigerators, etc.
- We had a few bumps but no train wrecks!



We had to make operational changes

- Changing the procedures presented it's own challenges
- We increased the number of days open to the public
- We had to decrease the number of workers per day
- We had to change some of our packing procedures to accommodate our decrease in staff
- We had to be flexible and when one thing didn't work we tried another
- Some residents loved the new way and some did not
- I had to make sure everyone was getting the same information
- It took a while before it was smooth sailing but we soon began to work like we had prior to COVID
- I tried to maintain my sanity by telling myself COVID wouldn't last forever....



As it got better for us work-wise, it got worse supply-wise

- First it was the PPE crisis!
- Then in 2021 it was the great 55-gallon OT Drum Metal Crisis!
- Then came the poly drum crisis!
- Now the vermiculite crisis!
- So what did we do that has taken a lot of the pressure off of us?



Personal Protective Equipment –

Have a great working relationship with your vendor

- If you have extra money – purchase and store PPE!
- We had extra money on our PO for our safety supplies
- We actually purchased some N95 masks because we have a problem with dust
- Purchase more durable items! (Cost a little more - but last longer, has better protection, and it will save money in the long run)



Drum Crisis = Change How You Pack

Drum Metals (55 Gallon DM)

- First there were NO RECON DRUMS!
- Then there were no new drums!
- Polys – hard to find also!



When you have no drums for bulking – you do more box packing!

- Pack all non-bulk waste streams into poly drums
- If there is a very small amount in the container – pour it onto a spill pad, let it dry and pack accordingly (watch out for incompatibles!)
- Latex – box it because it is cheaper (1/2 full and up)
- Instead of bulking the 5 gallons we are packing into M³ boxes and placing 1's and smaller containers around the 5's.
- Very small amount of latex paint – oil dry and then place in trash roll-off
- All OBP is bulked
- This has helped cut the number of 55 gallon DM's we use

Packing Materials



Vermiculite – What if we run out?

- Clean Earth is doing everything they can to purchase verm
 - Looking at different types
 - Must be compatible
- We have permission to use less
 - Enough to cover and cushion the bottom (about 3-4 inches)
 - Cushion any glass containers with plastic ones
 - If you have a leaking container, place it in a plastic bag
 - Make sure containers are upright!
- If run out of verm you can use oil dry **only** in toxic/flams & acid/bases
- Spill pads - place them in the bottom and around bottom containers
- You must use a drum liner if you use these methods!
- If Clean Earth is not your vendor – get permission first!



Oil Dry can be used



What can you do to maintain your program



Supply problems have caused the costs to increase. The answer is going to be different for each facility

- Talk to your vendor
 - What suggestions do they have?
 - Can you comingle waste streams?
 - Is it cheaper to pack latex and OBP together or separately?
 - Can you palletize the 5 gallons and shrink wrap to save on box costs?
- Are there less expensive options
 - Temporarily stop accepting latex paint (ask residents to combine their cans or dry smaller cans)
 - Check and see if there is a less expensive disposal method
 - “Landfill vs Recycle”
- Think outside the box
 - Adopt a drum (Works great for events!)
 - Events can go to BOPA only!
 - SEP Funds
 - Grants
 - Ask for donations



What could we have done that would have made it easier?

I cannot think of anything that we could have done to make it easier.

- We already had experience working with disasters.
- We had unknowingly planned ahead by ordering PPE and Supplies before COVID.
- We were ready to ship so we didn't have to scramble for a shipping date.
- We took the time off to listen to others and learn what challenges they faced.
- Having been a vendor in my past career, I knew a lot about what to look for.
- This best way to maintain a program during these type of situations is communication and trust.
- I relied on my team! They are out there in the trenches and I trusted them to know what would work best. I just gave the OK and made sure it was safe and compliant.



Let others know what has worked for your facility

- Let others know what is working for your facility or where you found those “Can’t find items”
- Discussing what has worked for you is a great start to solving problems for others
- Go to the TCEQ website to locate other programs in your area
https://www.tceq.texas.gov/downloads/p2/household-hazardous-waste/hhw_contacts.pdf
- Put in “TCEQ Contacts for Local Household Hazardous Waste Programs” and click on **HHW Collection Programs** under How do I find a collection in my area?



Cheryl Burton Fentress

HC HHW Program Manager

6900 Hahl Road Houston 77040

346.286.4294

cheryl.burton-fentress@eng.hctx.net

