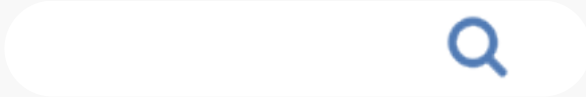




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# Start the Year Off Right with a Life-Cycle Assessment

Thursday, January 2, 2014 by [Carrie Anton](#)

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There is no better time than the new year to get a handle on your company's waste management efforts. While improving upon the trash you generate may fall to the bottom of your business's resolution list, there are a lot of benefits to bumping it up to the top. Increased revenue, **environmental sustainability**, and more efficient operational practices are just a few of the advantages that could come from an overall waste review.

Understanding your organization's waste may seem a daunting task, but the reality is that it all comes down to a review of the products or services you offer, also called a "life-cycle assessment." According to the **EPA**, a life-cycle assessment is "a technique to assess the environmental aspects and potential impacts associated with a product, process, or service, by:

- compiling an inventory of relevant energy and material inputs and environmental releases.
- evaluating the potential environmental impacts

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- associated with identified inputs and releases.
- interpreting the results to help you make a more informed decision.”

At the basic level, a life-cycle assessment looks at the complete process beginning with raw materials that come from the earth to the end products and what goes back into the environment. This concept is sometimes described as “cradle-to-grave,” because it gives a overall perspective of every product stage as a whole.

When conducting a life-cycle assessment, four stages are necessary:

- **Goal and Scope Definition:** Define the context for the assessment, including a description of the product, process, or activity.
- **Inventory Analysis:** Specify the raw materials used, such as water and energy, and the environmental emissions, such as air pollution and waste water.
- **Impact Assessment:** Use the inventory analysis to identify the impact of emissions on humans and the environment.
- **Interpretation:** Evaluate the inventory and impact to identify how best to meet the goal of the assessment.

Performing life-cycle assessments on existing and future products or services can help to ensure that the changes you make to your business operations are not simply shifting impact from one environmental area to the next. Instead comparisons can be made efficiently and effectively, allowing you to focus in on areas of specific concern.

If you'd like to perform a life-cycle assessment, but need

additional guidance, contact [Hazardous Waste Experts](#) at 800-936-2311 is to assist in all four stages of the life-cycle assessment.

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