

Municipal Solid Waste Unit-based Pricing (UBP)¹ Case Study

Northfield, Massachusetts²
Population: 3,032

Prepared by: The Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA)³

The Town of Northfield is a rural community located in western Massachusetts on the border with both New Hampshire and Vermont. Northfield implemented pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) at its transfer station in October 2005 to reduce solid waste management costs for the town, reduce the volume of materials entering the waste stream, and increase recycling rates. The Town decided to design their system so that PAYT income would cover disposal costs, and the Town's budget would pay for operating the transfer station and hauling the trash to the landfill.

When PAYT was adopted, approximately 70 percent of Northfield's households used the transfer station. Today, almost 80 percent of households bring their trash and sorted recyclables to the transfer station where recycling is free, and the fee for trash is \$0.75 for a 15 gallon bag and \$1.50 for a 33 gallon bag. Northfield requires that residents use bags purchased by the Town and sold to residents at the Town offices and at local merchants. The transfer station is open 8:00- 6:00 Wednesdays and Fridays and 7:00-4:00 on Saturdays.

Results:

- The amount of trash disposed was reduced by over 40 percent – from 795 tons in 2004 to 460 tons in 2006.
- Even though the number of households using the transfer station has increased 15 percent since 2006, the amount of trash disposed has decreased to 373 tons in 2013.
- Disposal costs for the six month period of January to June were reduced from \$22,800 in 2005 to \$14,533 in 2006.
- The number of times trash needed to be hauled to the landfill was cut almost in half, along with the cost to the Town from \$7,176 for the period of January to June 2005 to \$3,872 for the same period in 2006.

Northfield did not notice an increase in illegal disposal.

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¹ Also known as: variable rate pricing, pay-as-you-throw (PAYT), and save-money-and-reduce-trash (SMART).

² The information in the case study is based on correspondence with Jan Ameen, Executive Director, Franklin County Solid Waste Management District.

³ NEWMOA is a non-profit, non-partisan interstate association whose membership is composed of the state environmental agency directors of the hazardous waste, solid waste, waste site cleanup, and pollution prevention programs in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Visit: www.newmoa.org.