



## HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGER JOBS AND HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGER JOB DESCRIPTION

Many people are involved in the management of America's rubbish, from the local garbage collector to the analytical chemist, but no aspect of waste management poses the challenges faced by hazardous waste professionals. Management of hazardous waste is perhaps the weakest link in America's dynamic industrial economy, because of the dangers posed by toxic chemicals, nuclear byproducts and organic garbage.

A career in hazardous waste disposal and management may lead you to a lab, to a landfill, or to Washington, D.C. Several federal agencies deal with hazardous waste, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Defense, and the Department of Energy. Private industrial enterprises, such as large corporations, employ their own teams of waste specialists or hire consultants to manage their hazardous waste output. A hazardous waste professional may be a geologist, a chemist, or a nuclear physicist. Other hazardous waste professionals are engineers or managers, working to develop systems to reduce waste in the production process or to protect the environment from the dangerous substances that must be disposed of. Many specialists must work together to reduce the burden of hazardous waste.

There are two approaches to hazardous waste management: Remedial and removal. Remedial waste management specialists define the waste problem--for instance, a leaky landfill seeping dangerous chemicals into a drinking-water supply--and then explore various solutions to the problem. They have to consider the impact on the environment, design a solution and finally put that solution into motion. Removal specialists control and clean up major hazardous waste accidents, such as oil spills.

### Paying Your Dues

A bachelor's degree is necessary for this profession and, in today's competitive job-market, a master's degree or even a doctorate is preferred. Highly sought-after hazardous waste professionals usually specialize in one or more sciences. Major in geology, chemistry, physics, ecology, or any combination of sciences. If you want to specialize, look into soil, air, or water ecology. Since much of your job may require preparing environmental impact statements or proposing waste-management systems, it's a good idea to develop your speaking and writing skills.

Working for the government is rewarding, but it's not always easy. If you choose a job with the EPA or another federal agency, remember that you are joining a large bureaucracy whose commitment to waste management is occasionally diluted by political considerations. Big businesses that hire hazardous waste professionals are committed to keeping the air, earth, and water clean, but they must also keep their eyes on the bottom line. A committed hazardous waste specialist must be patient and resourceful to fulfill this twin agenda. Despite the obstacles, and because of the growing emphasis on environmentalism, effective professionals are always in demand.

### Associated Careers

If you're interested in this area, but toxic chemicals aren't for you, the natural sciences are still worth exploring. Agriculture, industry, and the academic community all need qualified scientists. The skill that goes into designing a remedial waste management system can also be applied to managing other systems and to general business management.

### Past And Future

Garbage has always been a danger, and its improper disposal has led to some of history's most vicious epidemics. The industrial revolution, symbolized by belching smokestacks, made the problem truly stand out. Nevertheless, it wasn't until after World War II that the U.S. government took steps to limit pollution. The Superfund legislation of 1980, which dedicated billions of dollars to financing hazardous waste cleanups, set in motion what is now the thriving industry of hazardous waste disposal. A pressing problem, waste management is a promising field.

### Quality of Life

#### Two Years Out

Many professionals work part-time while getting their master's degrees or doctorates in environmental science, and the part-time jobs often turn into full-time positions when they graduate. Professionals analyze and collect samples and write summary reports. Hours are average to long, but most professionals spend time reading professional journals and traveling for the job.

#### Five Years Out

Professionals start to specialize in remedial or removal management, depending on their temperament and abilities, and available opportunities. Many publish articles in professional journals, which enhances their reputations. Government employees often shift to the private sector in years four through six, citing better pay, more control over working conditions, and greater responsibilities. Hours remain stable; salary increases.

#### Ten Years Out

Hazardous waste removers lead teams and direct tests at this point, rather than spend time in the field or lab conducting them. Many are involved in policy discussions and environmental and business issues, and engage in debates over technology.

### Professional Profile

# of people in profession:	89,000
% male:	90
% female:	10
average hours per week:	40

### Professionals Read

Integrated Waste Management  
Journal of Environmental Quality  
Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education

### Books, Films and TV Shows Featuring the Profession

*Men at Work*  
*Roc*  
*Dragnet (the movie)*

### Major Employers

Alliedsignal	BFI	Dow Chemical Company
665 Lybrand Street	708 Third Avenue	P.O. Box 1655
Postville, IA 56162	Tel: 212-818-9831	Midland, MI 48641-1655
Tel: 319-864-7321	Fax: 212-818-9895	Tel: 201-443-0100
	Contact: Personnel	Fax: 517-636-1000
	Contact: Applicant Center	

### You'll Have Contact With

Chemists  
EPA Officials  
Haulers  
Recyclers

### Major Associations

American Water Works Association Water Environment Federation  
6666 West Quincy Avenue 601 Wythe Street  
Denver, CO 80235 Alexandria, VA 22314-1994  
Tel: 303-794-7711 Tel: 703-684-2400  
Fax: 303-795-1400 Fax: 703-684-2492

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