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Excellence in Waste Management: Who Cares?

Everyone...only it's a little naïve to expect John Q. public (remember him?) to let his dinner grow cold on the table in order to show appreciation for not having to wade through the tons of trash he so blithely wheels out to the street in the course of a year. When you get right down to it, public apathy for our endeavors may well be the finest proof of excellence there is, not that it ranks there with hearty slap on the back, a vocal "well done" or a pay raise. Waste management it can be said with some justification not only is stealthier than the B-2, it's performed at a unit cost that won't pay for the air (actually it's nitrogen) in the tires of the billion dollar fuzzbuster. Even when waste hits the headlines, it's less apt to be about system costs or operational difficulties on Main Street than the upset some of its more flamboyant practitioners have fomented on Wall Street. Thus the overwhelming conclusion is that across the board people in waste management are doing a top-notch job. So when SWANA picks out a few each year to commend for their excellence, we all better stand up and take note.

SWANA's 1999 Excellence Awards Program Award Winners

SWANA's Excellence in Solid Waste Management Awards Program recognizes and encourages the development of environmentally- and economically-sound solid waste management programs. The awards are based on several criteria that evaluate a commitment to these goals. Among these criteria are environmental compliance, program efficiency and effectiveness, operational safety, and innovation.

While all of these are important, winners are selected on the basis of the relevant aspects of their facilities, systems, or programs that exemplify excellence in solid waste management and are worthy of recognition. Judges look for evidence of achievement above and beyond the "call of duty." The SWANA Excellence Award Winners for 1999 in the various categories are as follow:

Landfill Excellence. This award recognizes excellence in landfill design and operations, landfill gas and leachate management, operational health and safety programs, aesthetics, public education, regulatory compliance, employee training, and community education.

Gold--Zemel Road Landfill, Charlotte County – Department of Environmental Service, Punta Gorda, FL

Silver--Rolling Hills Landfill, Delaware County Solid Waste Authority, Boyertown, PA

Bronze--Buncombe County Solid Waste Management Facility, Buncombe County Solid Waste Department, Asheville, NC

Landfill Gas Excellence. Applicable to the specific area of landfill gas management and utilization, the award recognizes excellence in design and operational innovation, environmental benefits, control of air emissions, health and safety, public education, regulatory compliance, employee training, and community education.

Gold, Silver, and Bronze Landfill Gas Excellence awards will be presented this year. However, names of the winners were not available in time to meet this issue's deadline.

Excellence in Collection Systems. The award recognizes excellence in equipment innovations, information management, routing, operational efficiency, health and safety programs, public education, regulatory compliance, employee training, and community education.

Gold--Not awarded

Silver--City of Scottsdale, Scottsdale, AZ

Bronze--No 1999 award

Waste-to-Energy Excellence. The award recognizes excellence in equipment innovation and facility design, ash reuse, air pollution control, operational efficiency, health and safety programs, public education, regulatory compliance, employee training, and community education.

Gold--Lee County Solid Waste Resource Recovery Facility, Ogden Martin Systems of Lee, Inc., Fort Myers, FL

Silver and Bronze--No 1999 award

Christmas Tree Recycling Excellence. Addressing a serious and widespread special waste challenge, this award recognizes excellence in equipment innovation and collection methods, economic viability, market development, public education, and community education.

Gold--San Diego Environmental Services Dept., City of San Diego, CA

Silver and Bronze--No 1999 award

Special Waste Management Excellence. Management of special wastes (i.e., hazardous wastes, tires, used oil, white goods, wood wastes, etc.) is of growing concern. This award assesses a variety of aspects including equipment innovation and management methods, operational efficiency, health and safety programs, waste exchanges, alternative products usage, public education, regulatory compliance, employee training, and community education.

Gold--Metro Waste Authority Regional Collection Center, Bondurant, IA

Silver--Morris County Municipal Utility Authority, Mendham, NJ

Bronze--awaiting site visit

Excellence in Public Education. The Public Education award recognizes creative solid waste programs that inform and educate residents and business owners on a variety of solid waste issues as well as enhance their community relations and services provided to the community.

Gold--Lake County Solid Waste Management District, Merrillville, IN

Silver--Sedgwick County Dept. of Environmental Resources, Wichita, KS

Bronze--Oakridge Landfill/WMI, Inc., Dorchester, SC

Excellence in School Curricula. Affirming the importance of long range educational programs, this award recognizes excellence in educating K-12 students on environmental issues through cooperative programs with teachers, school administrations and community leaders.

Gold--American Forest Foundation, Washington, DC

Silver--Los Angeles County Dept. of Public Works, Alhambra, CA

Bronz (Tie)--Manitoba Product Stewardship Corp., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada and Town of Markham, Markham, Ontario, Canada

Recycling Excellence. The Recycling Excellence award recognizes excellence in equipment innovation, information management, and collection methods, market development, source reduction, public education, employee training, and community education.

Gold (Tie)--Virginia Peninsulas Public Service Authority, Hampton, VA and Maryland Environmental Services, Annapolis, MD

Silver--City of Albuquerque Solid Waste Management Dept., Albuquerque, NM

Bronze--awaiting site visit

Transfer Station Excellence. Transfer--recognizes excellence in equipment innovation and facility design, operational efficiency, health and safety programs, public education, regulatory compliance, employee training, and community education.

Gold--No 1999 award.

Silver--Grand Island Area Transfer Station, City of Grand Island Solid Waste Division, Grand Island, NE.

Bronze--No 1999 award.

Excellence in Planning and Financial Management. This award recognizes excellence in implementing a change in the areas of financial management, contract management, fee structures, system integration, securing revenues, labor management, etc.; while the planning process is taken into account, the results derived from that process are the primary basis for award.

Gold--Midshore Regional Solid Waste Facility, Maryland Environmental Service, Annapolis, MD

Silver--No 1999 award.

Bronze--No 1999 award.

Integrated System Excellence. This award recognizes excellence in implementing, managing, and sustaining an integrated solid waste management system that includes multiple solid waste management components (collection, recycling, landfill, waste-to-energy, composting, etc.). While the planning process is taken into account, the results derived from that process are the primary basis for award.

Gold--Southern Idaho Solid Waste, Burley, ID

Silver (tie)--The County of San Bernardino Waste System Division, Norcal/San Bernardino, Inc., San Bernardino, CA and Onondaga County Resource Recovery Facility, North Syracuse, NY

Bronze--No 1999 award

In addition to the above, Innovation Awards recognize facilities, systems, and programs from within the pool of applicants for the thirteen awards categories. These individuals are to be singled out for their commitment to innovation and creativity.

Now About 2000

The eligibility requirements are simple and straightforward.

- ❑ The competition is open to SWANA Members only.
- ❑ While proposers or primary authors *may* be SWANA members, the facilities, systems, or program owners or operators being considered for an award *must* be SWANA members.
- ❑ To be considered for awards, facilities, systems, or programs must have been in operation for at least one year as of the first day of January of the award year. Thus for consideration in 2000, the entity must have been in existence prior to January 1, 1999.
- ❑ For the Integrated System and Planning and Financial Management categories, the end result of a planning process must have been implemented for at least 6 months prior to the beginning of the award year. Thus for consideration in 2000, this means prior to July 1, 1999.
- ❑ For Special Events that do not operate continuously (e.g., a one-day HHW collection event) the event must have been completed after the beginning of the year preceding the year of the award. Thus for consideration in 2000, this means after January 1, 1999.
- ❑ Gold Award recipients may not reapply for the same facility, system, or program award for the ensuing five years of their award. Thus, all facilities, systems and programs are eligible to apply except for 1995-1999 Gold award recipients.

My guess is that for every 1999 award winner there are at least a thousand similar activities equally deserving of recognition, but we and the public will never know unless their excellence is brought to the attention of SWANA's judges. Why should you go to the time and trouble to compete for an award? Because your efforts and those of your staff deserve recognition, and because the public needs to know what an asset your operation is to the community.