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Zero Waste

Zero Waste is a concept that challenges the old way of thinking about waste as something that has no value and to be thrown away. According to the [Zero Waste Alliance](#):

Zero waste suggests that the entire concept of waste should be eliminated. Instead, waste should be thought of as a “residual product” or simply a “potential resource” to counter our basic acceptance of waste as a normal course of events. Opportunities such as reduced costs, increased profits, and reduced environmental impacts are found when returning these “residual products” or “resources” as food to either natural and industrial systems.

Zero Waste is a whole system approach that changes the way materials flow through society and ultimately results in no waste. It involves reducing consumption, minimising wastage, maximising recycling and composting, and ensuring that products and materials are designed to use less resources and made to be reused, recycled or biodegradable.

Nature is the best Zero Waste model. There is no waste in nature and by-products produced become resources for others or are assimilated harmlessly back to the surroundings.



The Zero Waste Hierarchy

The Zero Waste hierarchy refers to the following options for managing waste (in order of priority):

1. Right in the beginning, waste should be prevented or reduced through redesign, reduced packaging and material use, and less consumption.
2. Waste should be reused, repaired or refurbished for their original use or for another purpose.
3. Waste should be recycled, reprocessed or composted into raw materials and useful resources.
4. Waste should be recovered for their energy content through waste-to-energy or incineration facilities.
5. After all of the above have been done, waste should be landfilled in a safe and sustainable manner.

Benefits of Zero Waste

The benefits of Zero Waste is that it helps to conserve our resources, reduce pollution, create jobs in waste management, reduce waste costs, increase the lifespan of our Semakau Landfill and incineration plants, and mitigate climate change.

Zero Waste is an extraordinary concept that can lead society, business, and cities to innovative breakthroughs that can save the environment, lives, and money. Through the lens of Zero Waste, an entirely new relationship between humans and systems is envisaged, the only one that can create more security and well being for people while reducing dramatically our impact upon planet earth. The excitement is on two levels: it provides a broad and far-reaching vision, and yet it is practical and applicable today. – Paul Hawken, environmentalist and author (from the publication, The End of Waste, by the Zero Waste New Zealand Trust)

Can We Achieve Zero Waste?

Zero is the goal but it is important not to be over-focused on the word ‘zero’. What matters is the concept behind Zero Waste. The road to Zero Waste is a long journey and it requires the efforts of individuals, communities, organisations, businesses and the government, working closely together towards Zero Waste. We invite all Singaporeans to support the vision of a Zero Waste Singapore. Yes We Can.

The 3Rs



You can take action by practising the 3 Rs in your daily lives – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (in order of sequence). The sequence is important, as source reduction is usually the best way to minimise waste while recycling still has some impact on the environment and should be done last.

1. **Reduce** by eliminating or minimising the waste in the beginning.
2. **Reuse** by using the waste several times in its original form or for another purpose.
3. **Recycle** by sending the waste to be processed as a resource for new products.

For example, let's take a look at a plastic bottle of mineral water. Reduce by not buying the plastic bottle and drink from the tap or use your own reusable bottle instead.



But if you really have to buy the bottle of water, then reuse it after drinking the water. Reuse the plastic bottle as your water bottle for refilling, use it as a flower vase, use it for storing other liquids, or use it to make art decorative items.

After reusing the plastic bottle for some time and when it becomes dirty or damaged, don't throw it away in the rubbish bin. Recycle the plastic bottle by depositing it into the recycling bag or bin under the recycling programme. The bottle will be collected and processed into plastic pellets that are used as feedstock for making new plastic bottles and products.

You can take action now towards Zero Waste by Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Just follow our tips and resources found in the [Reduce](#), [Reuse](#) and [Recycle](#) categories.

Our Waste Challenge



In Singapore, the amount of waste disposed has increased about 7 times over the past 45 years, from 1,200 tonnes/day in 1970 to 8,284 tonnes/day in 2015. Each person disposed about 0.86 kg of domestic waste per day in 2015.

If this continues, the projected lifespan of our Semakau Landfill would be about 35 years, and additional incineration plants would have to be built every 7 to 10 years.

This poses a challenge as it is difficult to find land for the construction of new incineration plants and landfills in land-scarce Singapore.

In addition, high cost is involved in the construction of new waste disposal facilities. The construction cost is about \$1.8 billion for our first four incineration plants and \$610 million for Semakau Landfill.

More importantly, the real challenge is whether we can change our current unsustainable materials economy and resource use, which follows a take-make-use-throw linear model, and shift towards a [circular economy](#).

The unsustainable linear model uses natural and energy resources to produce goods and stuff, which are consumed and disposed of as waste, resulting in economic losses and environmental degradation.

For a better understanding of the materials economy and our waste challenge, watch The Story of Stuff below. [The Story of Stuff](#) is a 20-minute film by Annie Leonard, which takes an interesting look at our production and consumption patterns, and the connections between environmental and social issues.

The Story of Stuff



Waste Management in Singapore

Waste Collection

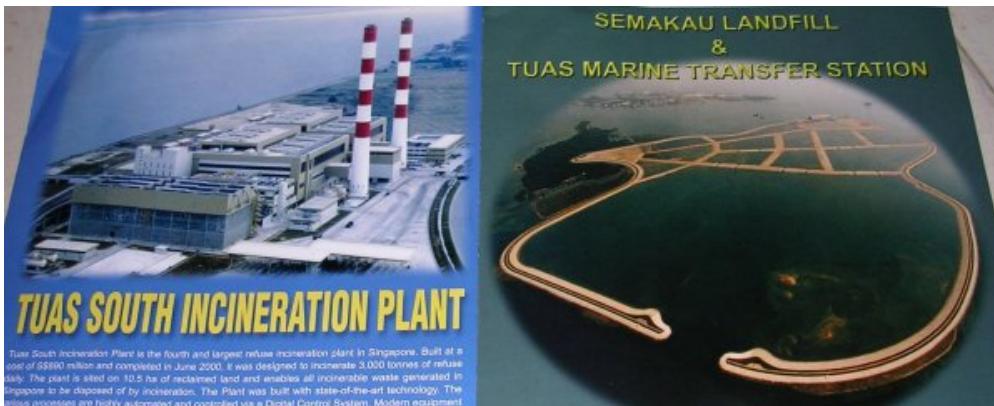
The [public waste collection](#) in Singapore is divided into 7 sectors managed by four licensed Public Waste Collectors (PWCs) as shown below.

- Pasir Ris-Tampines; Clementi-Bukit Merah (by Veolia ES Singapore Pte Ltd)
- Jurong (by Colex Environmental Pte Ltd)
- Bedok; City-Punggol; Woodlands-Yishun (by SembWaste Pte Ltd)
- Ang Mo Kio-Toa Payoh (by 800 Super Waste Management Pte Ltd)

The PWCs are responsible for the collection of waste from residential and trade premises in Singapore. They are also required to provide recycling services under the [National Recycling Programme](#) (NRP). For commercial and industrial premises, the waste are collected separately by licensed [general waste collectors](#).

Waste Disposal

The waste collected by the PWCs and general waste collectors are disposed of at the four waste-to-energy plants (Tuas, Tuas South, Senoko, and Keppel Seghers Tuas Waste-To-Energy Plant) and the offshore Semakau Landfill. Waste that are incinerable are sent to the incineration plants while non-incinerable waste and incineration ashes are sent to the landfill. About 37% of waste in Singapore are incinerated and 2% are landfilled in 2015.



In 2014, about 8,338 tonnes per day of waste was disposed – 57% was domestic waste and 43% was non-domestic waste.

Waste Recycling

Waste that are not disposed of are sent for recycling. In 2015, about 4.6 million tonnes of waste was recycled and an overall recycling rate of 61% was achieved. The quantity and recycling rate for each type of waste are shown in the [NEA website](#).

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Comments

26 Responses to “Zero Waste”



1. [Sharifah](#) says:

[October 10, 2011 at 9:45 am](#)

Hi there!

My office use lots of paper.. and we try to recycle but ther is no recycle bin nearby. So, we are looking for recycling co. who wants this papers to recycle. If you guys do that please do email me at sharifahnurain@rocketmail.com

Cheers!

[Reply](#)



o [Ong Sihao](#) says:

[April 7, 2015 at 3:38 pm](#)

We can reduce plastic bags use. We can aim for zero waste by simply reducing the use of plastic bags. two ways to reduce:

1. We can bring canvas bags from home to the supermarket to buy things instead of asking for plastic bags from the cashier.
2. If some customers insisted on giving them a plastic bag, charge them with some money like 30 cents per bag .