Garbage Stinks, Landfills Leak...

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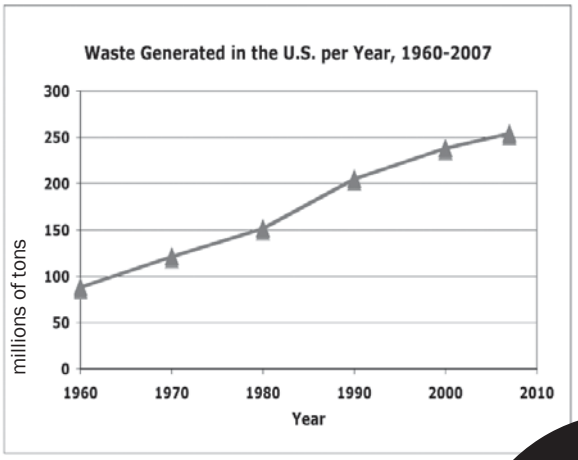


For years people have buried or burned their trash. What do people do now? Why is it different? What if you had to keep all your garbage with you?

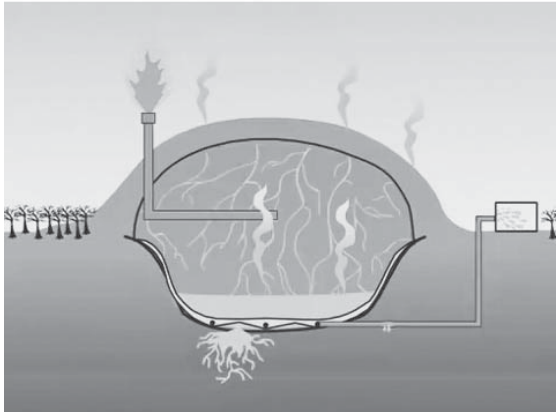
Landfill owners and operators bear the cost of leaks for 30-50 years. After that, taxpayers have to pay to fix problems and clean up.

After 6 months, Americans have kept 1% of their purchases.

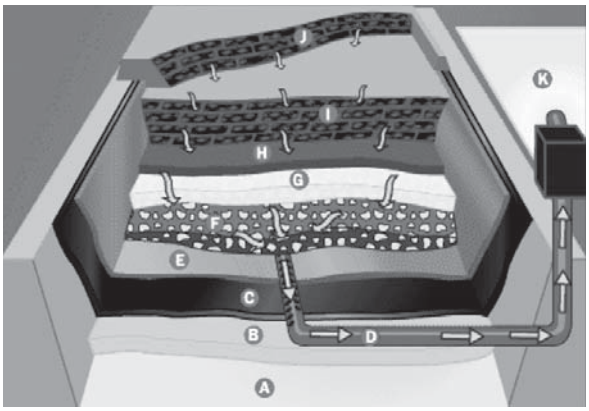
Municipal solid waste contains 80,000 chemicals. The EPA has required the testing of about 200 of them. U.S. laws assume that a chemical is safe unless proven otherwise.

No one wants to live near stinky trash. But it has to go somewhere. Do you live near a landfill? Which communities do you think get dumped on? (See article on pp. 44-45 about disproportionate dumping.)

... But Zero Waste is Possible!

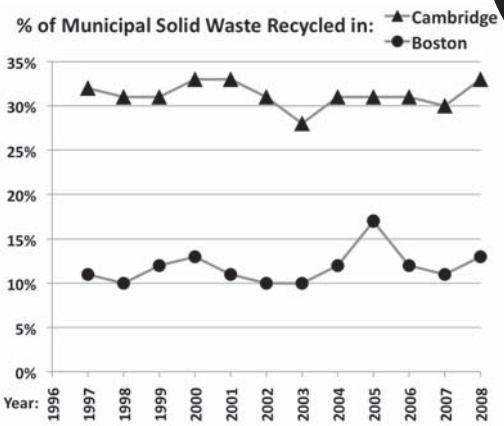


Plastic liners are supposed to keep the trash from contaminating the soil and groundwater. The liners are about 1/10 of an inch thick. All liners leak. To learn more, search youtube for "How Does a Modern Landfill Work."



Landfills are the biggest source of methane gas made by people in the U.S. Methane contributes to climate change. Some landfills have systems that capture the methane and use it for energy.

100% of landfills leak.



Why do you think recycling rates vary so much between these two cities? In most cities, recycling rates are under 50%. How could you get your city or region to develop more effective recycling practices?

Austin, Texas hopes to reduce trash by 20% by 2012 and to achieve zero waste by 2040. Other cities, like Seattle and San Francisco, have similar plans. Visit <www.grrn.org/zerowaste> to learn more about zero waste.