



# **Governor Locke Service and Quality Improvement Award**

Ecology Nominations  
January 1999

## ***TurboWaste***

### **Our Business**

Approximately 7,300 companies report hazardous waste disposal and handling information to Ecology each year. This information enables Ecology to measure trends in reducing the amount of toxic chemicals being generated, disposed or stored in our environment (one of our performance measures with the Governor). Based upon this information, we make decisions on where to target our activities. From 1982 until recently, businesses submitted hazardous waste information to us on paper forms.

### **The Problem**

- The processing of hazardous waste reports is labor intensive.
- It was taking longer each year to obtain, process and analyze the reports thereby delaying access to the data for state and federal use.
- The volume of information was increasing.
- Data quality was declining.
- The budget to handle this information was shrinking.
- Sharing data with the public and other governmental agencies was difficult.

### **The Solution**

Through applying the principles “out-of-the-box”, “faster-better-cheaper”, “paper-work burden reduction”, “turn data to knowledge”, “report burden reduction”, a small team of Ecology staff came up with the idea of *TurboWaste*. In the age of computers and Internet, why couldn’t businesses submit their annual reports to Ecology in an electronic form?

### **Approach**

- **Use of data to identify problem**
  - It was taking 18 months to review report data and publish trends in hazardous waste management.
  - Reports submitted to Ecology contained many errors.

- Large amount of staff time was spent contacting businesses for data corrections.
- **Support of strategic direction/agency mission**
  - This project supports Ecology's mission to promote the wise management of our air, land and water. Having current, credible data enables us to make timely decisions to manage the amount of hazardous waste entering our environment.
  - This project also supports our regulatory reform efforts to reduce the reporting burden on Washington businesses.

## **Deployment**

- **Effective use of quality tools**
  - The team approached this project by first conducting a Data Needs Analysis jointly with business, government and environmental groups. This process enabled the team to determine:
    - ❖ State and federal standards that must be met,
    - ❖ The needs of the business community and environmental groups; and
    - ❖ What data was truly "essential."
  - The team researched options for re-designing report forms and processes for submitting them annually.
  - The team was able to reduce the number of data elements collected by 25%.
- **Involvement of others**
  - Our primary customers in managing hazardous waste generation in Washington are businesses, state programs, and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.
  - Environmental groups are interested in the reporting of annual hazardous waste trends.
  - The team worked with all four groups to ensure the system that was developed met multiple needs.
- **Innovative Solution**
  - State environmental agencies are required by law to report annual hazardous waste information to the federal government. Ecology was one of the first in the nation to have an electronic system that interfaces between business and Ecology.
  - Electronic reporting of environmental information is new in our state. It is being received with praise from business.
- **Sustainability**
  - *TurboWaste* is kept current with the rapidly changing world of computer capabilities and regulatory changes. The software can be purchased on CD-ROM for a \$10.00 media fee or it can be downloaded free from Ecology's web page.

- Currently, 241 companies representing 86% of the reportable hazardous waste information are submitting their data electronically. Our goal is to have 95% of the data submitted electronically over the next 12 months.
- **Transferable to Others**
  - The federal Environmental Protection Agency is interested in the ability of sharing our system with all of the other states. They are documenting a case study of Ecology's success in a publication that guides other states through the electronic reporting process.
  - Internally to Ecology, we have been sharing the success of this project with other programs. Many of our agency programs collect, analyze and report data generated from businesses across the state.

## **Results**

- **Improved service to customers/stakeholder/employees**
  - Here's what businesses are saying:
    - ❖ "I love *TurboWaste*, it worked great for me this year." (Lesa Grant, Sharp Microelectronics)
    - ❖ "I found the *TurboWaste* software some of the most user friendly I have ever used. Instructions were clear and the Annual Report was easy to submit." (Brian Bigler, Wards Cove Packing Company)
  - 68 data quality checks in *TurboWaste* allow businesses to correct their data before submitting it to Ecology. This avoids repeat contacts with Ecology staff to correct their data thereby saving them time and money.
  - *TurboWaste* makes it faster and easier for businesses to fill out their annual reports. Pull down menu's, auto summations and logic checks are just a few of the program features that businesses find helpful.
  - Businesses are using *TurboWaste* as a tool to help them monitor and manage their hazardous waste generation throughout the entire year (not just at reporting time).
- **Measured and monitored with data**
  - Number of companies participating in electronic submittal of annual data: 241 out of 7,283.
  - Percent of data submitted electronically by the group of 241 companies: 86%. Even though this group was small in number; it comprised the "big waste generators."
  - Submittal of paper reports from businesses reduced from 100% to 14%.

- Reduced reporting time: from 18 months to 6 months. The goal is to reduce this to 3 months.
  - ❖ Data quality has improved and error rate reduced (through the use of 68 data quality checks before the data is submitted electronically to Ecology).
  - ❖ Data is available sooner for use by the state and federal government.
- Reduced amount of annual data required from businesses: 25%
- **Actual savings realized or proactive cost avoidance**
  - 50% reduction in data entry costs: savings of \$15,000 per year.
  - 1.5 full time employees re-directed to hazardous waste technical assistance support: savings of \$78,300 per year.

### **The Team**

Dan Kruger, Jean Rushing, Dan Dexter, Tom Cook

### **Conclusion**

Ecology is very proud of this team's work to improve efficiency, customer service and the use of taxpayer's money. The staff who worked on this project have demonstrated the very highest level of excellence in state government, and they are an outstanding example to all state employees.