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# Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) in Massachusetts

## *Program Update for March 2007*

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As of July 2006, 120 of the Commonwealth's 351 municipalities have implemented a PAYT program. Of these PAYT municipalities—which include 5 cities with populations of 50,000 to 175,000—44 provide *curbside* PAYT collection programs and 76 offer *drop-off* PAYT programs. Recycling rates have increased to 40% in more than half of these communities.

### ***Why is PAYT working in Massachusetts?***

In 1995, the Commonwealth's Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) made a state-level decision to promote flexible PAYT programs that allow each community to develop a program that fits its individual circumstances.

The State owes its high record of success to informative outreach and educational programs that provide municipal decision-makers the tools they need to understand how PAYT programs work. This municipal outreach includes:

- An ongoing series of PAYT workshops at various locations throughout the State;
- DEP staff participation in conferences and trade shows to disseminate printed guides on PAYT implementation, along with other material on waste reduction and financial considerations
- Technical assistance from MASSDEP staff

An important aspect of MASSDEP's support to municipalities is its Municipal Waste Reduction/PAYT Grant program, which offers grants to qualified municipalities instituting a new PAYT program:

- Grant funds may be used to fund bags or stickers and other start-up costs of a new PAYT program as pre-approved by MASSDEP;
- Grantees may receive up to \$4/participating household for these costs;
- Technical Assistance grants for waste reduction provide municipalities with MASSDEP personnel time to assess the potential effect of changing to a PAYT program.

## ***Why is PAYT Spreading in Massachusetts?***

- Massachusetts has closed a majority of unlined landfills (there are 17 landfills remaining) and 7 waste combustors are now in operation. Municipal Solid Waste tipping fees range from a low of \$25 per ton to highs of \$100+ per ton. ***Increasingly higher costs for MSW disposal*** provide an incentive to reduce trash in order to reduce disposal costs, which has led communities to develop their own PAYT programs.
- When a municipality goes PAYT, residents bordering that municipality become aware of the new PAYT program (same local TV/cable, newspapers, friends and family) and hear about that town's success with the program. Over time, municipalities with PAYT programs can create a bundling effect with other municipalities.

## ***Massachusetts Survey Supports Pay-As-You Throw***

The success of PAYT has again been demonstrated by a 2005 recycling participation study conducted for MASSDEP. Among its most significant findings, the report shows that 60 percent of residents in PAYT communities claim to "always" recycle, compared to 39 percent of residents in non-PAYT communities. Regarding newspapers specifically, 91 percent of residents in PAYT communities "always" recycle, compared to 73 percent of those in non-PAYT communities.

Recycling rates in PAYT communities are consistently higher than those in non-PAYT communities, independent of what residents claim to be their motivation.

Communities in Massachusetts that do not currently use PAYT could certainly benefit from it. Self-admitted issues of motivation are the biggest barriers (49 percent) to recycling more. Thirteen percent of those surveyed cite the inconvenience and 16 percent blame whatever program is currently in place in their community for their lack of recycling. When asked if they would recycle more if they had to "pay-as-you-throw" for their trash but could recycle for free, 59% said yes.

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or

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/reducere.htm/>