



Metro Waste Authority

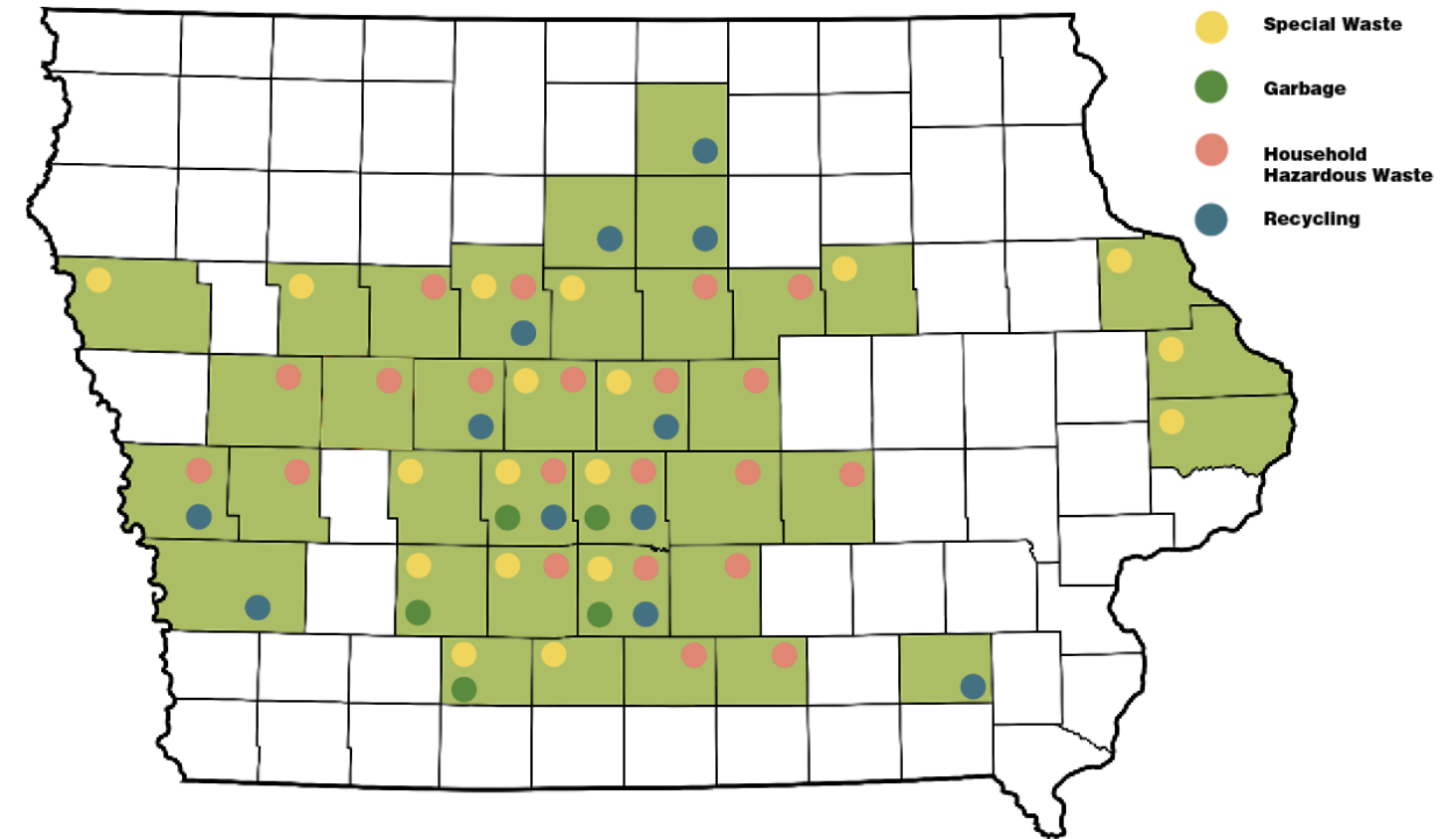
ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25





counties served

While originally formed to manage solid waste for Polk County, the agency's services now extend to nearly 250 communities in 37 counties throughout the state.



overview

Metro Waste Authority's approach to managing Central Iowa's garbage, recycling, yard waste, hazardous waste, environmental education, landfill operations, and solid waste transportation is regional, just as it was when the agency was formed in 1969.

Offering disposal services in nearly 250 communities in 37 counties, Metro Waste Authority minimizes the duplication of resources and keeps residents' and businesses' tonnage rates among the lowest in the country. Metro Waste Authority is an innovator, leader, and facilitator that keeps safe, smart disposal options top-of-mind and easily achievable in the region.

Each year, staff focuses on achieving objectives around these six simply stated, yet complex goals:

- 1. provide safe, smart recycling and disposal options for residents.*
- 2. provide safe, smart recycling and disposal options for businesses.*
- 3. introduce and maintain robust, innovative recycling programs.*
- 4. ensure each facility is innovative, efficient, and environmentally focused.*
- 5. ensure each facility is an asset to our communities.*
- 6. encourage employees to reach their fullest potential.*

Together, Metro Waste Authority's Board of Directors, staff, facilities, programs, and services carry out the vision of achieving "no wasted resources" in Central Iowa and beyond.



letter from the ceo

Metro Waste Authority's mission is to provide answers for safe and smart disposal and recycling. For 55 years, that mission has guided our work and reinforced our commitment to the communities and residents we serve.

The pages ahead reflect another year of progress, highlighting achievements that demonstrate both operational excellence and our growing impact as a trusted resource across the state.

In 2024-25, we focused on strengthening operations, implementing new training approaches, and refining internal processes.

Additionally, we continued our focus on education. From improving access to information to offering professional development opportunities, we're equipping people and partners we serve with the knowledge they need to manage waste responsibly.

We also prioritized building a strong, values-driven culture where employees feel supported, empowered, and inspired to lead. From recognition programs and engagement events to new training and growth opportunities, these efforts are part of our ongoing commitment to being an employer of choice in our region.

These accomplishments reflect the dedication of our staff, the leadership of our Board of Directors, and the ongoing support of the communities we serve. Together, we continue to advance our vision of "no wasted resources."

As we look ahead, I'm excited to build on this momentum and continue delivering innovative, sustainable, and exceptional service to Central Iowa and beyond.



Cheers,

Michael McCoy
Chief Executive Officer

METRO PARK EAST LANDFILL

Metro Park East Landfill, the largest sanitary landfill in Iowa, is located just outside of Mitchellville. In 1971, the site accepted its first load of garbage, leaving the region's use of "dumps" in the past.

The site is a scientifically engineered landfill, carefully constructed to protect land, groundwater, and air quality. Although the site was designed to serve as the final resting place for Polk County's garbage, today it is much more. Now, this location pioneers the agency's vision of "no wasted resources."

In addition to properly managing garbage, many services exist onsite to prevent materials (such as tires, appliances, shingles, yard waste, and construction and demolition debris) from ever entering the landfill.

458,749

tons of garbage received

decreased 4,472 tons

5,623

appliances recycled

decreased 900 appliances



LAUNCHING INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

To exemplify the agency's vision of "no wasted resources," an appliance part resale program was launched using functional components recovered through the Appliance Demanufacturing Program. Since its launch, nearly 550 working parts have been listed for sale, extending the life of useful materials and offering an affordable repair option.

EVOLVING FOR EFFICIENCY

A dedicated parts department was created at the mechanic shop, complete with an inventory control system to streamline maintenance operations.

INVESTING IN OPERATIONS

To improve staff efficiency and effectiveness, the agency invested in a new training approach at the facility. This initiative, combined with changes to the waste burial process, resulted in increased compaction of garbage, which is better management of our most finite asset — space. To accomplish this, the agency invested in two additional full-time employees and eight additional pieces of heavy equipment.

METRO COMPOST CENTER

Through the Compost It! yard waste program, residents in participating communities can conveniently dispose of yard and garden waste at the curb. This waste is brought to the nine-acre Metro Compost Center, located in Mitchellville, to be ground, turned, and maintained for four months as it decomposes. Once ready, it is screened, tested, certified, and sold as Grow Gold Compost, a natural soil enhancer.



44,873
tons of yard waste collected
.....
increased 1,703 tons

11,767
cubic yards of Grow Gold Compost sold
.....
increased 574 cubic yards

7,354
pre-packaged bags of Grow Gold Compost sold
.....
increased 6,388 bags

EXPANDING ACCESS TO COMPOST

To improve customer access to the in-demand soil enhancer, the agency expanded the number of retail locations offering bagged Grow Gold Compost by 13 stores. As a result, sales of the product increased, with more than 7,000 bags sold.

STREAMLINING THE COMPOST PROCESS

Staff improved the use of the site's nine-acre compost pad to streamline the composting process and better support growing demand. Enhancements include a revised windrow layout for greater efficiency and a centralized staging area for better material handling.



METRO PARK WEST LANDFILL

Metro Park West Landfill is located just outside Perry. Metro Waste Authority purchased the facility in 2009, making the site a public, rather than private, landfill for the first time since the 1970s.

Metro Park West's landfill space is carefully crafted, with four layers above and below the garbage, to ensure the land and groundwater are always protected. This site gives Metro Waste Authority a footprint in Dallas County, providing safe, smart disposal options for its businesses and residents.

While the landfill provides a responsible destination for garbage, the site also offers alternative disposal options for items that don't belong in the landfill (such as tires, appliances, and household hazardous waste).

55,161
tons of garbage received
.....
increased 5,464 tons

441
appliances recycled
.....
decreased 41 appliances



NEW FACILITY ENTRANCE

The agency established a new entrance to the facility in accordance with the 40-year master plan design completed in 2022. The master plan guides decisions on operations, prioritizing optimal land use, soil balance, and environmental protection.



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Construction was completed on a new scale house to support agency growth and enhance the work environment. The new building includes a break room, bathrooms, office space, and a dedicated scale operations area. It is also equipped with solar power backup for improved energy reliability.



INNOVATIVE DIVERSION METHODS

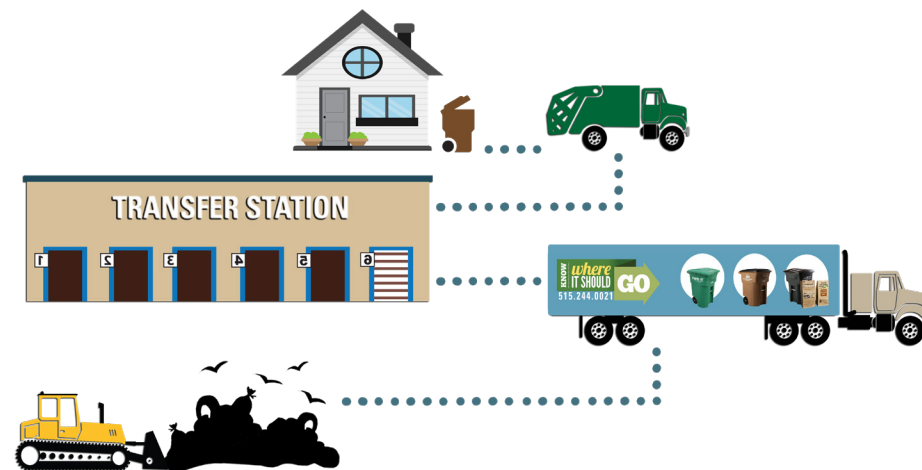
To continue exploring innovative uses for waste material, the agency repurposed contaminated soil and shredded vegetative debris as alternative daily cover at the site. Daily cover is a state-mandated method for covering exposed waste at the end of each operational day.

METRO TRANSFER STATIONS

Metro Waste Authority has two strategically placed transfer stations in the metro: Metro Northwest Transfer Station in Grimes and Metro Central Transfer Station in Des Moines.

These sites serve as temporary hubs for both residential and commercial waste, as it's quickly offloaded by haulers, then loaded into Metro Waste Authority semis to be transferred to the landfill. One semi-trailer holds the same amount of waste as four and a half garbage trucks.

This system increases collection efficiencies, thus, lowering collection costs, reducing fuel consumption, improving air quality, and lessening wear on road infrastructure while enhancing road safety.



142,140
*tons of garbage received at
Metro Northwest Transfer Station*



167,058
*tons of garbage received at
Metro Central Transfer Station*



16,414
*transfer trips made
to the landfill*

METRO HAZARDOUS WASTE DROP-OFF

Metro Hazardous Waste Drop-Off, located in Bondurant, safely processes and disposes of hazardous waste brought in by residents and businesses. It also handles material collected from the Grimes satellite location, the houseside collection program, and 20 additional counties across Iowa.



698,327

pounds of hazardous material safely disposed

.....
decreased 113,198 pounds

244,738

pounds of material repurposed in the Swap Shop

.....
increased 75,218 pounds

NEW DISPOSAL OPTIONS

The agency launched free battery drop-off containers in 17 communities across the metro to offer a safe, convenient disposal option for batteries and electronics. Since their introduction, 3,300 pounds of batteries have been collected. This effort was partially funded through a grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

EXTENDED FACILITY HOURS

The facility extended its hours to offer additional morning availability, increasing accessibility and convenience for residents.

INCREASING COLLECTION CONVENIENCE

Collection through the houseside collection program increased by nearly 64%, allowing the agency to capture and safely dispose of more hazardous materials through this convenient service option.



CENTRAL OFFICE

Metro Waste Authority's administrative office is located in East Village, downtown Des Moines. This location is central to supporting staff, facilities, programs, and services across the organization.

Administrative functions, including customer care, finance, and public affairs, operate from this site. It is also host to monthly meetings for the agency's Board of Directors. Metro Waste Authority opened the building in 2002 and rents the excess space to various tenants who represent a variety of services.

125

employees supported

8

locations supported



SUPPORTING STAFF GROWTH

New initiatives were introduced to actively engage and empower staff across all departments, such as improved team huddles as well as opportunities to participate in trainings, facility tours, and conference participation. These efforts contributed to the promotion of 11 team members this year, reflecting the agency's commitment to growth and internal development.

CELEBRATING OUR VALUES

Fostering a strong agency culture remained a priority through ongoing emphasis on core values, recognition of staff achievements, and employee-focused events. As part of this effort, a new video was launched to highlight the agency's values of positivity, integrity, teamwork, leadership, and innovation. Featuring a diverse range of employees from across facilities, the video celebrates those who exemplify these values and reinforces a shared sense of purpose throughout the agency.

METRO RECYCLING FACILITY

Metro Recycling Facility began operations in 2021 and was developed with the goal of applying the same successful regional approach from the landfill to the recycling center.

This 101,100 square foot facility was built with advanced technology, strategic partnerships, and enhanced education to process recycling collected through the agency's Curb It! recycling program and ensure a sustainable partner for recycling in the Midwest.

32,466

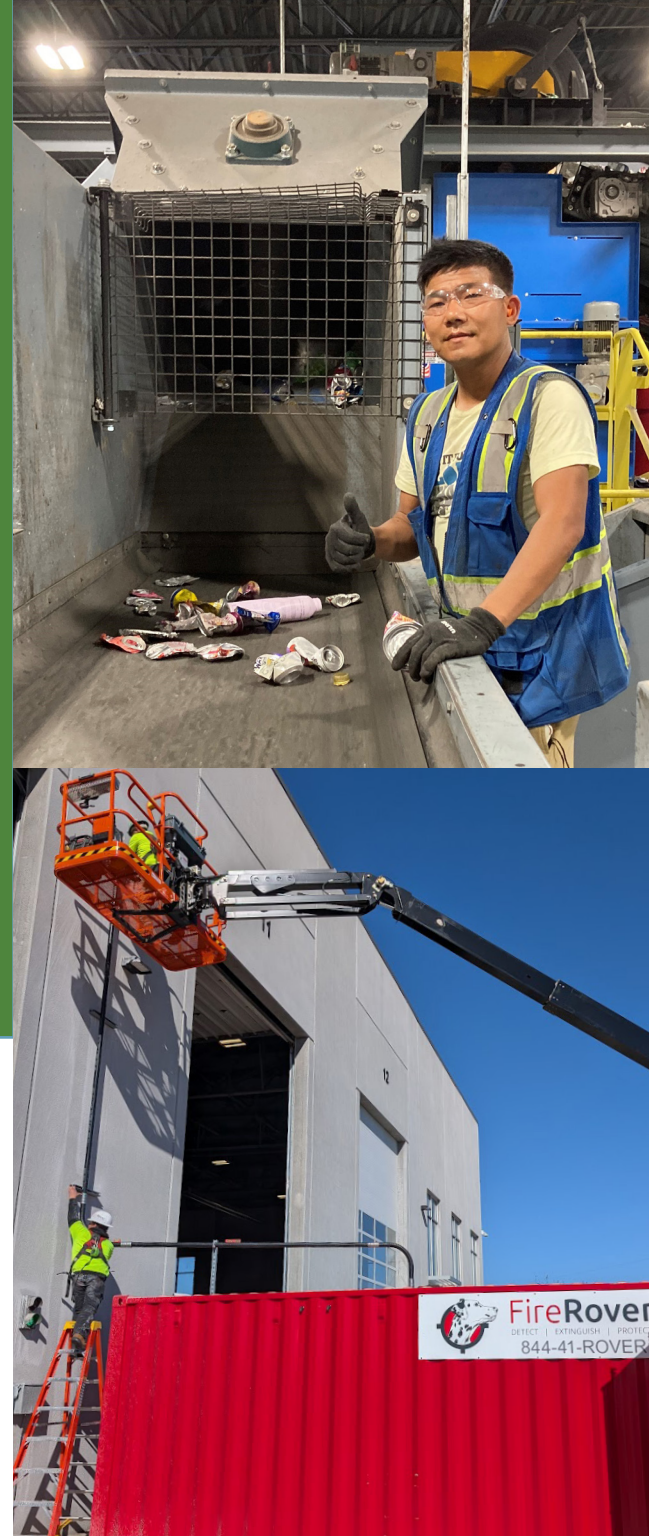
tons of recycling received

increased 6,375 tons

18,622

bales of recyclables sold

decreased 4,074 bales



RESIDENTS RECYCLING RIGHT

An audit of the Curb It! residential recycling program showed a historic low contamination rate of 11%, far below the national average of 25%. This achievement reflects the agency's targeted investments in strategic education and marketing efforts designed to positively influence customer behavior and increase program engagement.

REDUCING THE RISK OF FIRES

To improve operations and prevent fires, the agency implemented advanced prevention strategies, including the deployment of a fire rover and a thermal alert system. These technologies enable early detection of fires, allowing for rapid response and minimizing potential damage.

METRO REDEMPTION CENTERS

Metro Waste Authority piloted a redemption program in 2022 after reform of Iowa's Bottle Bill allowed many stores to opt out of processing can and bottle returns, resulting in fewer convenient outlets for residents.

The program first launched at Metro Hazardous Waste Drop-Off in Bondurant and was positively received by residents across the metro. After seven months of successful operations, the program expanded to a second location at Metro Recycling Facility in Grimes. The two Metro Redemption Centers recycled more than three million cans and bottles in the first full year of operations.



5.8

*million cans & bottles
redeemed*

.....
increased 2.7 million containers

19

*local organizations
participating in the fundraiser
program*

INCREASING REDEMPTION ACCESSIBILITY

Both Metro Redemption Center locations expanded weekday hours, including more morning and afternoon shifts and introducing weekend availability, to continue offering accessible and convenient can and bottle redemption options for metro residents.

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED FUNDRAISING

In the first year of the Bottle & Can Redemption Fundraiser Program, nearly \$400 was raised for 19 different nonprofits, schools, community groups, and other local organizations. This amount is equivalent to 8,000 beverage containers.

education

Environmental education is one of Metro Waste Authority's key priorities. Because education is the first step to changing behavior, the agency takes a comprehensive approach to educate Central Iowans from pre-kindergarten to retirement.



OFFERING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The agency hosted multiple professional training opportunities, including Certified Landfill Operator Trainings and Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) Trainings, as well as the first Certified Transfer Station Operator Course. Open to staff and statewide partners, the programs educated nearly 200 participants this year, offered hands-on experience, shared operational best practices, and strengthened relationships with landfills and agencies across Iowa.

ENGAGING EDUCATORS

A sustainability-focused teacher workshop was launched, empowering 10 educators from six districts to bring real-world environmental issues into their classrooms and helping inspire the next generation of informed and responsible decision-makers.

EVOLVING EDUCATION TOUCHPOINTS

To create a more interactive and engaging visitor experience, Metro Recycling Facility's education center shifted to a pre-registration model for public hours. The center welcomed more than 2,500 visitors to learn about recycling and sustainability through exhibit spaces, hands-on games and activities, and an observation deck overlooking the sorting floor.

74

education & outreach events

56

field trips hosted

community



Metro Waste Authority was originally formed as an agency comprised of 16 member communities and one county. Today, the partnerships with these communities – and more – are thriving, providing programs and services that support safe, smart waste disposal for more than 100,000 households in the metro.

7,865
chatbot interactions

IMPROVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

A chatbot was launched on the agency's website to enhance customer support and improve user experience. Since its launch, the chatbot has offered more than 6,000 automated responses and 1,700 live interactions, helping residents quickly access support and information on agency services, programs, and events.

62,212
customer care calls

CELEBRATING AN EVERYDAY HERO

Metro Waste Authority presented its first Honorary Everyday Hero award to a resident who regularly helps neighbors with their recycling and garbage carts, exemplifying the agency's core values of positivity, integrity, teamwork, leadership, and innovation. The honoree was recognized with a certificate of appreciation, behind-the-scenes tours at Metro Waste Authority facilities, and a curated box of agency swag.

252
communities served



environment

While Metro Waste Authority was originally formed to manage a landfill for one county, the role of the agency quickly evolved to managing waste from a holistic environmental perspective. To guide the agency's environmental efforts, Metro Waste Authority participates in the Environmental Management System (EMS) through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. This is a voluntary program that provides a framework for solid waste organizations to set goals for environmental improvement.

80,500

*pounds of carbon dioxide
emissions saved through
solar panels*

500

*acres of restored prairie
at the Environmental
Learning Center*



REDUCING WINDBLOWN LITTER

The agency introduced specially designed wind latches for Curb It! carts to secure loose recycling material and reduce litter on windy days. The latches protect the lids from the elements but allow them to open easily when the cart is tipped by the collection truck. Since launch, more than 150 wind latches have been installed on recycling carts.

SHIFTING TO A GREENER FLEET

The agency received a grant to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure at Central Office. This improvement supports the transition to a greener fleet, helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and encourages staff and building tenants to adopt electric and hybrid vehicles.

STRENGTHENING OUR IMPACT

The agency restructured its EMS program to better leverage the core team's expertise, improving efficiency and strengthening its environmental impact.



financials



Metro Waste Authority is a 28E quasi-governmental agency. The organization’s revenue is 100 percent generated by the fees from services, rather than from state or federal taxes. Metro Waste Authority is a fiscally-conservative organization that aims to reinvest revenue back into programs and services, as well as giving back to the communities it represents.

