

# Commentary

## Landfill advancements a benefit



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Death, taxes and waste are three things that you can count on says Pat Sliworsky, the CAO of Mountain View Regional Waste Management Commission.

Sliworsky has spent a 26-year career managing municipal waste so that the environment and taxpayer-funded budgets are protected by using technological innovation and good operating techniques.

The Mountain View Regional Waste Management Commission, which has

members that include the municipalities of the county, Didsbury, Carstairs, Cremona, Olds and Sundre, doesn't have a dump, it has a landfill.

"Gone are the days when we piled garbage in pits and set fire to it," Sliworsky says.

No longer are dumps havens for feeding bears and curious kids.

While the commission is hearing griping from Olds-area residents because of the closure of the transfer station, its landfill near Didsbury quietly goes about the business of processing the waste the county's 12,500 residents and businesses dispose of each year.

Sliworsky's guided tour of the landfill and its technology is authoritative because he has done as much as anyone during his career to set the standards for Alberta landfills.

Although the waste management commission is a creature of the provincial Municipal Affairs department which audits its financial records, it is Alberta Environment that establishes, oversees and enforces the always-increasing list of environmental standards the landfill must meet.

To meet these standards and at the same time manage the taxpayer-funded costs responsibly, new

technologies and techniques are constantly emerging.

The most recent is the use of hollow metal plates called iron grizzlies as the required daily cover for the garbage trucked to the landfill and compacted to eliminate air that enables the formation of methane and complicates water management.

The daily cover was formerly provided by spreading six inches of clay over the waste. The use of the seven-foot by 32-foot by six-inch plates meets the regulations and the plates can be speedily removed at the beginning of each day and reused overnight.

The financial, time and space savings add up to a considerable financial benefit as well as operating convenience.

The environmental improvements began decades ago with the introduction of a lining system installed before a landfill opens.

The layers of clay and synthetic material liners prevent groundwater contamination by leaching from the waste.

A half dozen water monitoring wells around the perimeter of the landfill are tested regularly by an independent contractor.

Water monitoring will continue after the landfill closes in about 15 years and cells are covered by clay and soil until Alberta Environment allows the site to be abandoned.

Its future use is limited to pasture land.

The coming thing in Alberta waste management is waste to energy.

Edmonton has embarked on the first waste to energy project, however Alberta Environment is proceeding cautiously until it fully understands the problems that the process has.

Sliworsky said Mountain View County is one of 75 Alberta municipalities that have joined SAEWA, the Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Alliance, to research and understand the technology, and to plan its introduction.

*Frank Dabbs is the editor of the Didsbury Review.*