

SWAPPCon 2024

7 November 2024 09:00-12:00 | Development Academy of the Philippines, Tagaytay City

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Acknowledgments.

Good morning, magandang umaga.

My sincere thanks to the Solid Waste Management Association of the Philippines for organizing this conference; and for inviting me to talk about disaster waste and EPR initiatives in my country Sweden. It's an honor for me to join you this morning.

I begin my intervention on disaster waste:

Natural disasters leave responders, humanitarian actors, and government agencies with much to prepare for. Disaster waste is one of them.

Safe handling, removal, and management of disaster waste are important issues in disaster response and recovery. Disaster waste is a threat to health, safety, and the environment, and can also be a major impediment to post-disaster rescue operations.

Sweden has a comprehensive approach to managing post-disaster waste, focusing on minimizing environmental impact and ensuring public safety. Allow me to share some key aspects of Sweden's disaster waste management strategy.

First, **Immediate Response:** In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, responders prioritize clearing debris to facilitate rescue operations and prevent further hazards. This includes removing hazardous materials and ensuring safe disposal.

Second, **Medium-Term Actions:** Once the immediate threats are managed, efforts shift to sorting and recycling waste. Sweden has robust systems for separating different types of waste, such as metals, plastics, and organic materials, to maximize recycling and reuse.

Third, **Long-Term Planning:** We emphasize the importance of long-term waste management planning. This includes developing contingency plans and ensuring that waste management practices are sustainable and resilient to future disasters.

Fourth, **Health and Safety:** Protecting the health and safety of both the public and waste management workers is a top priority. This involves strict regulations and guidelines for handling hazardous waste and ensuring that proper protective measures are in place.

For instance,

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- Using personal protective equipment (PPE) for everyone handling disaster waste, including volunteers and local waste collectors. Typical PPE includes hard boots, hard hats, gloves, overalls and masks.
- Disaster sites should have access to proper changing and washing facilities for use during and after handling waste.
- Having adequate dust suppression where rubble is being crushed or waste is being processed, for example spraying water to prevent dust from spreading in the air.

Fifth, and lastly, **Coordination and Communication**: Effective disaster waste management in Sweden relies on strong coordination between various stakeholders, including government agencies, local municipalities, and private sector partners. Clear communication channels are established to ensure efficient and effective waste management.

Here are some recommendations from Sweden:

- to have an updated directory of designated point persons and agencies and their assigned tasks. There is often a large number of NGOs and implementing agencies active in post disaster works.
- to set regular reporting timelines of collated data and the results of any waste assessment
- for local authorities to provide clear and transparent information about cleanup progress and future steps.

Sweden's approach is designed to be adaptable and scalable, ensuring that they can respond effectively to a wide range of disaster scenarios.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, or MSB, has developed disaster waste guidelines, provide guidance on how to properly manage disaster waste following emergencies, developed with the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit.

MSB has also held seven cycles of an International Training Program on Disaster Risk Management offered to Nepal, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. 62 Filipinos have joined and successfully completed the seven cycles of this training program. The participants are now leading initiatives to improve different aspects of disaster response in the country, including disaster waste.

Now, let me discuss Extended Producer Responsibility, EPR.

Sweden is a near zero-waste society where less than 1% of trash ends up in landfills. This is thanks to a series of policies of the government and its collaboration with the business sector, academia, and civil society, what we call the quadruple helix.

We focus on circular economy as an extremely effective tool to reduce resource use within a society while simultaneously cutting the environmental impacts.

EPR has a major role in a circular economy. Successful EPR is possible through the quadruple helix in action. That is, when there is a high level of trust and cooperation between companies and packaging producers; waste collection and management facilities

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(care of the local government); and education and awareness of the consumers on how to properly dispose of waste.

Sweden has been quite successful in implementing EPR, but we are also facing challenges.

We see a declining demand in recycled plastics, since it is still cheaper to use plastic made from raw materials than from recycled materials.

Since plastic packaging can consist of different types of materials with different characteristics, many consumers still lack knowledge about sorting plastic packaging. So more educational and public information campaigns are needed.

The recycling discourse is often focused on the consumers. But equally important actors are the companies who could improve the collection of their packaging after consumers have used their product, and how the collected packaging is recycled.

Local government units may face challenges in coming up with their EPR policies and processes.

The private sector, national government, and local governments must work together to collect and control waste and strive for circular economy where materials are used to their maximum lifespan.

In Sweden, we do this by:

- Elimination of single use items, especially single use plastics
- Educating families and households on proper waste segregation. Organic waste is separated from recyclables, and recyclables are rinsed and prepped before being dropped off in recycling bins.
- Importantly, the municipalities have systematic waste collection. Municipalities collect the separated waste using bins and containers. Some areas have doorstep collection systems, while others have recycling centers where residents can drop off their waste.
- Also, local governments work with businesses to develop circular economy solutions. For example, Malmö is working with the construction and building sector to increase recycling and upcycling of construction materials.

I would like to mention an initiative of the Nordic Embassies in Manila: We are currently collaborating with Pasig City to enhance the city's waste recovery and circular economy efforts through knowledge sharing and technology adoption.

Furthermore, Swedish companies in the Philippines lead EPR initiatives as a part of their corporate responsibility efforts.

For example, Tetra Pak is partnering with LGUs to set up recovery facilities for their beverage cartons. The collected cartons are turned into various products like furniture, cardboard boxes, and other paper products.

Swedish retailers IKEA and H&M have in-store collection facilities for their products that can be upcycled.

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To end my speech, I would like to commend SWAPP for your strong engagement in the important areas of disaster waste management and EPR.

Thank you, maraming salamat.

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