

PACWASTE COUNTRY PROFILE

PALAU

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PacWaste is a four year project (2014–2017) funded by the European Union and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), to improve regional hazardous waste management across the Pacific in the priority areas of healthcare waste, asbestos waste, E-waste and integrated atoll waste management.

A further priority for PacWaste is to foster links between Pacific island countries and encourage information sharing on sustainable waste management through regional collaboration and twinning arrangements.

Palau is one of 15 countries participating in PacWaste, with activities taking place in the project domains of healthcare waste, E-waste and asbestos.

Healthcare waste

PacWaste is working across 14 Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste to improve the management of healthcare waste. This waste type, also known as hospital, clinical or medical waste, is generated by hospitals and health clinics. Healthcare waste is hazardous because it has the potential to be infectious or harmful to humans and the environment.

In Palau, PacWaste conducted a healthcare waste management baseline survey of the country's only hospital – Belau National – in March 2014. Information was collected on current waste management processes, from ward-level waste generation through to treatment and disposal.

The survey found some significant healthcare waste management issues at the hospital, noting the lack of signage, very poor waste segregation and the very high frequency of needle stick injuries reported by both cleaning/maintenance and nursing staff due to improper handling and disposal of sharps. The survey also noted that healthcare waste was being disposed of at the local landfill, without being treated, due to problems with the hospital's existing incinerator.

To address these issues, PacWaste will conduct specialised training in healthcare waste management at the hospital and provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), signage and secure storage systems. A new high temperature incinerator will also be installed to ensure that healthcare waste can be disposed of safely.

Asbestos

PacWaste is working across 13 Pacific countries to address the issue of asbestos – a naturally occurring fibrous mineral that was once commonly used in building materials and other consumer items. Asbestos is now banned from most modern products as it has been found to be a major threat to human health.

In Palau, PacWaste conducted a baseline asbestos survey in June 2014 to determine the prevalence of asbestos, ascertain risks associated with the materials and identify best practice options for cost-effective and sustainable interventions.

The survey found relatively little asbestos on Palau, but noted with concern that asbestos containing materials had been used in the recent construction of the Malakal Power Station. To help to prevent the flow of 'new asbestos' into both Palau and the Pacific region, Palau will be included in PacWaste's regional public awareness campaign about asbestos risk.

E-waste

The rapidly increasing use of electrical and electronic equipment in the Pacific is resulting in increased volume of E-waste. Dumped E-waste can release harmful contaminants into the environment such as lead, cadmium and dioxins. The good news is that many end of life electronic items contain recoverable and valuable components such as copper, steel and gold.

Regionally, PacWaste is collecting information about current E-waste management and stockpiles across nine Pacific island countries to assist in the improved management of E-waste in the region.

In Palau, PacWaste will launch an E-waste pilot project through which training will be provided in how to safely extract and export valuable or hazardous materials from old electronic and computer equipment. Shipping and logistical support will also be given to enable the processed E-scrap to be exported internationally.

PacWaste Actions and Impact: Palau

ACTION	LOCATION	IMPACT
Healthcare waste		
Healthcare waste baseline survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belau National Hospital 	Baseline data on the current status of healthcare waste management is publically available.
Provision and installation of high temperature healthcare waste incinerator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belau National Hospital 	Healthcare facilities have increased capacity for the proper disposal of healthcare waste.
Incinerator operator training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belau National Hospital 	Incinerator operators have the necessary skills to operate and maintain equipment.
Healthcare waste management training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belau National Hospital 	Healthcare facilities can effectively and safely handle their waste from point of creation through to disposal.
Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), signage and secure storage systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belau National Hospital 	Healthcare facilities have improved storage facilities for healthcare waste and an integrated system of ensuring that wastes are clearly identified.
Assistance in developing a national healthcare waste strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National 	Healthcare waste management is prioritised at the national level in accordance with best practice.
Asbestos		
Asbestos baseline survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Koror Babeldoab 	Detailed information about the prevalence of asbestos is publically available.
Asbestos public awareness campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National 	Residents are aware of asbestos risks and the steps that can be taken to minimise exposure.
Assistance in developing a national asbestos strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National 	Asbestos management is prioritised at the national level in accordance with best practice.
E-waste		
E-waste reception and processing centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belau 	An EQPB operated E-waste collection and processing facility will be established at M DOCK.
E-waste pilot project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belau 	Workers are further trained in how to safely extract and export valuable or hazardous materials from E-waste.
E-waste public awareness campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National 	Residents are aware of their options for safely disposing of E-waste.
Information sharing, regional collaboration and twinning		
Connection to a developing recycler's network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional 	Opportunities are opened up for recycling materials such as scrap steel, plastics, E-waste, and Used Lead Acid Batteries.
Provision of resources, guidance materials and participation in regional workshops and other events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional 	Relevant national personnel have an improved understanding of best practice solutions for solid and hazardous waste management in the Pacific.

For more information

Detailed information about PacWaste activities in Palau, including baseline survey reports, are available at: www.sprep.org/pacwaste