

PACWASTE COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Photo: SPREP archive

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.

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 Republic of the Marshall Islands, PacWaste conducted a healthcare waste management baseline survey in April 2014, through which information was collected on current waste management processes, from ward-level waste generation through to treatment and disposal. Audits were conducted at Majuro Hospital (Majuro) and Ebeye Hospital (Kwajalein).

The survey found that healthcare waste segregation, containment practices and disposal was below standard at both locations, however staff and administrators at both hospitals had identified these issues and expressed a willingness to rectify them as a matter of priority.

To help this process, PacWaste will provide healthcare waste management training for staff, along with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), signage and secure storage systems to assist with waste segregation.

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. Asbestos is a serious issue for Pacific island countries that have used asbestos-containing building materials in the past.

In Republic of the Marshall Islands, PacWaste conducted a baseline asbestos survey in July 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 very few asbestos containing materials in Majuro, with only one site considered a moderate to high risk in terms of potential exposure to asbestos. PacWaste has committed to the removal, secure transport and safe disposal of this asbestos – located at the College of the Marshall Islands – which amounts to about 160m² of material.

To reduce the likelihood of 'new asbestos' being imported into the country, Republic of the Marshall Islands 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 Majuro, PacWaste will launch a Used Lead Acid Battery (ULAB) buy-back scheme that will ensure that ULABs can safely and sustainably be collected and exported and will provide training on their safe handling, storage and transportation.

Integrated Atoll Waste Management

Majuro atoll has been selected as the pilot site for the integrated atoll waste management component of the PacWaste project. The project will establish an integrated and sustainable solid waste management system in Majuro which improves and expands upon existing 4R practices (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), improves existing waste and disposal practices, and is founded on user-pays and polluter-pays principles.

The centrepiece of the pilot project will be the implementation of a pre-paid garbage bag system in Majuro. Through this system, specially produced garbage bags will be available for purchase from stores throughout the atoll for a small cost. A proportion of funds generated from the sale of the bags will go to the waste company to pay for the collection and disposal costs – allowing them to expand their collection services across the atoll and, ultimately, to make the waste collection service in Majuro financially self-sustaining.



PacWaste Actions and Impact: Republic of the Marshall Islands

ACTION	LOCATION	IMPACT
Healthcare waste		
Healthcare waste baseline survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Majuro Hospital (Majuro Atoll) ■ Ebeye Hospital (Kwajalein Atoll) 	Baseline data on the current status of healthcare waste management is publically available.
Healthcare waste management training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Majuro Hospital (Majuro Atoll) ■ Ebeye Hospital (Kwajalein Atoll) 	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"> ■ Majuro Hospital (Majuro Atoll) ■ Ebeye Hospital (Kwajalein Atoll) 	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"> ■ Majuro Atoll 	Detailed information about the prevalence of asbestos is publically available.
Removal, transport and disposal of around 160m ² of asbestos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ College of the Marshall Islands, Majuro 	High risk asbestos is safely removed, reducing the risk of exposure to the general population.
Asbestos management training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Majuro 	Asbestos can be effectively and safely removed and disposed of in accordance with international best practice.
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		
Establishment of Used Lead Acid Battery (ULAB) collection system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National 	ULABs can safely and sustainably be collected and exported.
E-waste public awareness campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National 	Residents are aware of their options for safely disposing of E-waste.
Integrated Atoll Waste Management		
Pilot project on integrated atoll waste management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Majuro Atoll 	An integrated, sustainable and replicable solid waste management system is established on Majuro.
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 and E-waste.
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 Republic of the Marshall Islands, including baseline survey reports, are available at: www.sprep.org/pacwaste