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NEXT-GENERATION WASTE-TO-ENERGY: WILL THERE BE ONE?

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ABSTRACT

The market for new waste-to-energy (WTE) facilities in the United States has been extremely limited because the playing field has become uneven. The industry's traditional playing field has been defined by economics on one end of the field and public perception on the other. However, a third, nearly impenetrable "red zone" has appeared, defined by government policy inconsistency. Examples include landfill gas being given tax credit status while WTE continues to be excluded; the removal of the moratorium on landfill capacity in Massachusetts while maintaining the moratorium on new WTE capacity; and DOE's support of unproven gasification technologies without parallel support for optimizing long-proven WTE technologies. This record of inconsistency keeps WTE on the back porch of public perception and separated from political acceptance as an important renewable energy strategy.

This paper challenges the WTE industry to collectively pursue a more aggressive stance with governments to prove that the playing field has become uneven and to shift public policy, including test program funding, as a means to level the playing field.

Presented in the paper are overviews of EAC's next-generation large-scale and small-scale resource recovery technologies, including patent-pending features for the achievement of zero disposal and zero pollutant emissions, all of which are based on practical answers to real-world problems and perceptions.

The paper concludes that the WTE industry has accepted as conventional wisdom barriers that are not valid constraints to new project development. Examples of current conventional wisdom include the assumption that WTE facilities must always be sited away from commercial centers at the expense of thermal efficiencies offered by co-generation of electricity and district heating/cooling; WTE will always be landfill dependent at the expense of real consumer products from byproducts; and emissions will never be able to compete in the future because of certain pollutants. All of these barriers can be breached on an even playing field with creativity, cooperation, and credibility.

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