



Household Chemical Waste and Electronics

RECYCLING FACILITY



Program Summary:

Lee County's Household Chemical Waste program began as primarily an electronics recycling program. 2,406 tons of electronics were collected in the first few years from curbside. Residents only had the opportunity to dispose of their household chemicals once a year at a collection event. The event grew in resident participation and was so busy that the need to expand the program became apparent.



As a result, Lee County opened a permanent, centrally located, full time facility in 2008 where residents could dispose of all of their household chemical waste and electronics Monday through Friday and the first Saturday of each month free of charge. Once per month, this location also hosted a small quantity generator business hazardous waste collection.

Much of the material brought in by residents was either brand new or almost full and still in good condition. In 2018, Lee County opened a reuse center that provides residents a location where they can pick up latex paint, household cleaners and pesticides for free.

The friendly staff provide information and education to patrons while they discard their unwanted chemicals.



Lee County HCW Program



Lee County has a nationally recognized, award-winning integrated solid waste system. The program manages garbage for more than 800,000 residents and more than 20,000 businesses throughout the county.

Along with managing garbage, recycling, yard waste and construction debris for the residents of Lee County, another material we are responsible for is chemical waste.



Proper management of the waste stream is vital for the health and wellbeing of the residents and wildlife of Lee County and for the sustainability of our precious natural resources.

Lee County HCW Program

Lee County began its Household Chemical Waste program in 2001 with the curbside collection of e-waste and one household chemical waste collection event each year.

The e-waste was collected in non-compaction vehicles and delivered to a temporary site that consisted of a tent on the side of a ball park offered for use by the City of Ft. Myers. This site was run by two dedicated employees who, with fork lift certification only, accepted the loads of electronics, inventoried each piece, stacked, palletized and shrink wrapped all of the e-waste until a load was ready for shipment.



Lee County HCW Program

In the early years of Lee County's e-waste curbside recycling program, the greatest amount of household e-waste consisted of large CRT monitors and older televisions. Of course keyboards, mice, laptops, printers, etc. were also included, but each monitor and television contained approximately eight pounds of lead. It was crucial to ensure proper disposal and keep this material out of the waste facility so it would not have a negative impact emissions. We also needed to keep this hazardous material out of our landfills, groundwater, and from being illegally dumped in our neighborhoods.



Lee County HCW Program

Chemical waste cannot be safely collected from the curb. As the HCW program matured, the county progressed from one annual collection event to quarterly events where residents could bring their household chemical waste. Solid Waste staff alongside our contracted HCW recyclers, would collect, process, pack and ship off the collected waste to be recycled and disposed of properly.



Each collection event served between several hundred and sometimes more than one thousand residents at a time. Customers had to wait in long lines in the Florida heat, and sometimes inclement weather, in order to dispose of their household chemicals. With the area's continuous and substantial growth, it was recognized that these quarterly collections no longer responsibly managed the household chemical waste for Lee County residents.

Lee County HCW Program

In 2008, the department opened a permanent facility where residents could bring their household chemicals, paints, pesticides and herbicides, along with e-waste, for disposal at no charge Monday through Friday and the first Saturday of each month. It is centrally located within the county for convenience to all residents.



This facility also provides the opportunity to regularly distribute educational material about our various programs rather than a couple times per year. Not only are we open every weekday for residents, we also host a small quantity generator commercial hazardous waste collection once per month. For a small fee, businesses can drop off their hazardous and chemical waste for proper disposal on the fourth Wednesday of every month.



Lee County HCW Program

Now that we operate our own permanent site for hazardous and chemical waste, Solid Waste staff has expanded from the original two employees, who are still with the department, to six full-time and one temporary employee. Each HCW full-time employee maintains a 40 hour Hazwoper certification, which is refreshed each year, a Hazardous Waste Transportation certification, a class B license and a forklift certification. Staff has completed customer service trainings and is dedicated to providing the best customer experience to all residents. Their training and professionalism shows in the many positive comments and commendations the Hazardous Waste department receives on a regular basis.



Lee County HCW Program

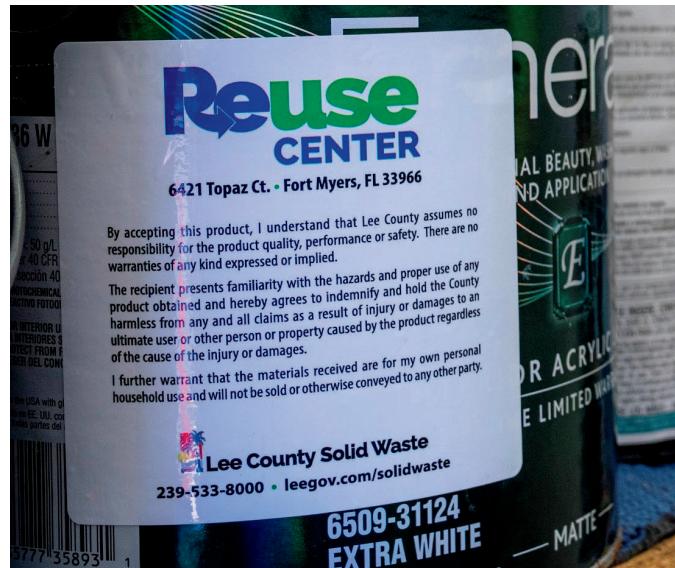
Data gathered in 2018 indicated that more than 70% of residents frequenting the HCW facility were from outside a five mile radius. Due to this, we purchased a large box truck, labeled it with HCW program branding and have partnered with the county's six surrounding municipalities to offer mobile collections each quarter. We began with five of these collections along with our original quarterly collections, and have now expanded to 26. Depending on the anticipated turn out, these collections are performed by our own staff in conjunction with our contracted hazardous waste partner.



Once the permanent facility was up and running, it became apparent that some brand new, never opened, or almost full and still useable products were being disposed of at a cost to the county.

Reuse CENTER

After researching liability issues and other successful programs, Lee County opened a Reuse store, at the same location of the drop off facility, for these items. Unused warehouse space was converted to a store front where residents could shop for in high quality interior and exterior paints, different kinds of pesticides, herbicides, floor cleaners, bathroom and kitchen disinfectants and many other useful household chemicals and take what they needed at no charge. Each product is marked with disclaimer language that was approved by the county attorney.

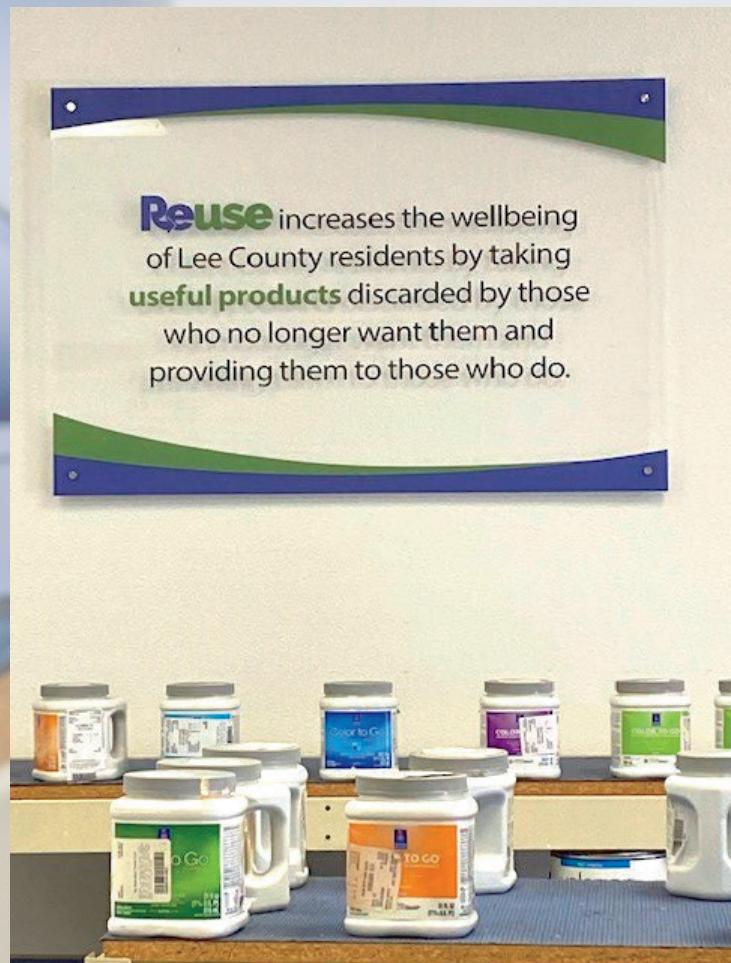




Why Reuse?

- Reuse extends the useful life of these materials
- Reuse keeps these items out of the waste stream
- Reuse requires fewer resources, less energy and less labor than recycling, disposal or manufacturing

The background shows shelves filled with various paint cans and containers.



Lee County HCW Program

Opening the Reuse center has helped members of the community obtain useful items for free at the same time as reducing the county's disposal costs for material that is still useable. Since opening in December, 2018, Lee County's Reuse Center has diverted 267,597 pounds of household chemicals away from final disposal and provided them free of charge to local residents.

The HCW program serves an average of 22,737 residential customers annually.

Lee County also provides an average of 194 small quantity generator commercial customers annually an opportunity to dispose of their material.

In spite of the pandemic, inbound program materials increased 43% over the past two years.

Lee County continues to expand programs that offer residents opportunities to not only reduce waste, but to find new ways of recycling and reusing as well. Everything is of value and nothing is waste unless it's wasted.



Household Chemical Waste and Electronics

RECYCLING FACILITY

Reuse CENTER

Katherine Kallas, Recycling Coordinator
Lee County Solid Waste
kkallas@leegov.com