

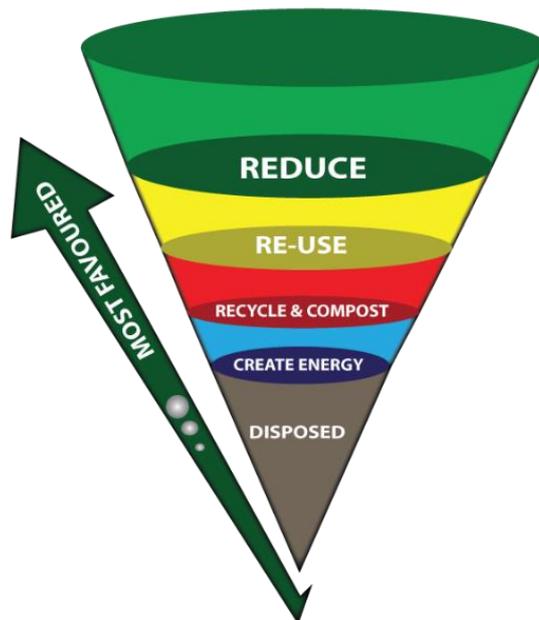


## MEDIA RELEASE

### Know where your waste goes

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

14 November 2017



[Department of Environmental Affairs, Waste Management Hierarchy, 2017]

*Each piece of waste has the potential to pollute the environment in a different way, which is also the reason why there is no single suitable waste management approach to address all types of waste. The waste management hierarchy<sup>1</sup> ranks waste management options in order of preference according to the type of waste, and therefore the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA) recognises the importance of putting emphasis on the hierarchy in its upcoming its flagship conference, [WasteCon 2018](#).*

“It is important that the cycle of waste, from consumer to final disposal is governed by the internationally accepted waste hierarchy, which through its successful application can have several benefits, such as pollution reduction, resource conservation, and job creation,” says Jan Palm, President of the IWMSA. “The application of the waste hierarchy most often starts in households with consumers,” Palm adds.

Household waste can be separated into three parts: solid waste that can be recycled, organic waste (food and garden), and non-recyclables; each type requiring different recovery, treatment and/or disposal methods. Recyclables are repurposed for commercial use, while organic waste should not be landfilled, but rather used to make compost or biogas. Non-recyclable waste is either landfilled or sent to a Waste-to-Energy (WtE) facility to be thermally treated to produce electricity.

“One of the primary waste management challenges today is ensuring that the different types of waste are adequately sorted so that it can be subjected to the correct recovery, treatment or disposal processes,” says Palm. “By being mindful at home and separating waste into its correct category, you are helping to prevent waste from ending up where it does not belong; contaminating the natural environment,” adds Palm.

Have you ever wondered how good South Africa is at sorting and recycling their waste? Looking at a common consumer item, the plastic bag, which is quickly becoming known as South Africa’s unofficial national flower, is one of the biggest environmental burdens posed on coastal and ocean environments. The Ocean Conservancy’s 2017 Coastal Clean-up report<sup>2</sup> indicates that during the 2016 effort to clean-up South Africa’s coastlines, plastic bags ranked as the fifth most picked up item. Four out of the top five items picked up all include plastics (plastic bags, food wrappers, beverage bottles and caps), most of which could have been recycled. “Another challenge is that once these items are picked up off beaches during clean-ups most recycling depots are reluctant to accept them as they are dirty and require further sorting and cleaning before they can actually be recycled,” says Palm.

“As we [IWMSA] continue to monitor the waste situation in our country, I would like to encourage all consumers to prevent waste where possible and to give [upcycling](#) a try,” encourages Palm.

The topics of ‘zero waste lifestyle’ and upcycling are trending more than ever on social media platforms nowadays. Living a zero waste lifestyle may seem like a challenge, however it can be a great opportunity to cut out short term use items such as plastic bags and bottles, and replace them with environmentally responsible reusable items. By doing this you have just taken a personal step up the waste management hierarchy.

If you feel like you need some guidance on your waste management have a look at the IWMSA’s [training](#) schedule, or [register for WasteCon 2018](#) which will provide a wealth of insight into applying the waste management hierarchy. To submit an abstract to be considered to present a paper at WasteCon 2018, visit the [Abstracts page](#) on the WasteCon 2018 website.

For more information on the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa visit [www.iwmsa.co.za](http://www.iwmsa.co.za). You can also follow IWMSA on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/iwmsa>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/IWMSA>).

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**List of references:**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Environmental Affairs, Waste Management Hierarchy.

<sup>2</sup>Ocean Conservancy, 2017. International Coastal Cleanup day report.