



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Managing waste in 2009**

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**Immediate Release**

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How do you set about disposing of over 26.4 million tons of rubbish per annum? This is a problem with which we are faced with every year, because at a conservative estimate, South Africa's population of around 48 million generates an astonishing average of 550kg's of waste per capita, per annum.

Waste is the keyword here. An alarming percentage of what we throw away probably need not have been wasted to begin with and even more disturbingly, a lot of that is food. We buy impulsively, overstock our fridges and cupboards and if you've ever attended a traditional 'braai', you'll know that we definitely over-cater! We buy with our eyes which retailers know very well, so they stock their shelves with oversized containers for maximum visual impact in the race to secure your rand. On special occasions, with Valentine's Day around the corner, large boxes and fancy forms of packaging seduce us into believing we are getting better value. It's all in the presentation, apparently without conscience or conscious thought on the part of the manufacturers.

We have a range of different waste products to manage, from spoiled food items to a fairly new problem called E-waste which comprises discarded electronic and electrical equipment such as mobile phones, computers and various appliances. It seems very few of us really know what to do in order to reduce the load and if we do, it's inconvenient to 'do the right thing'.

Many people are not aware of the entrepreneurs in our country who make a living from recycling waste. We have an inventive population that not only manages waste to earn their keep, but there are those that manufacture saleable objects from plastic, tin cans, and other waste items.

Vincent Charnley, President of the Institute of Waste Management is committed to focusing all of the Institute's attention on reducing, reusing and recycling this year, and sees plenty of potential employment for budding entrepreneurs in 2009.

Mr. Charnley says, "There needs to be a cohesive effort on the part of all the players in waste management to educate people about the crisis facing all of us if we don't curb our wasteful behaviour".

The problem is something we cannot ignore: 1,200 landfill sites releasing huge amounts of methane gas into the atmosphere, toxic waste leaching into water tables, supposedly green areas strewn with plastic and broken glass, lead and mercury ridden fish and a generation for whom asthma has become the norm.

We need to tread lightly on the earth. Vincent Charnley believes we should go back to basics and educate our children. "We need to get people excited about the many and varied career opportunities in waste management and make sure they know how serious a threat is posed by badly managed waste". He encourages all those involved to band together saying, "We at the IWMSA will be taking a much stronger position in the industry regarding waste management and we urge all companies to follow our example".

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