

America's Trash

The U.S. population generated around 250 million tons of garbage in 2010- this is the equivalent weight of 685 Empire State buildings! About 34% of this was recycled and composted but that still left 165 million tons of trash that were produced and not recovered (EPA, 2010). So what's the big deal?



No space for waste

We are generating waste at a much faster rate than it can biodegrade meaning that landfills are nearing their capacity and we are running out of space to put the trash. Garbage often ends up in the countryside or in the oceans which causes problems for animals (EPA, 2011).

Garbage decomposition

If garbage decomposes it releases methane (a 'greenhouse gas') or if it doesn't, it can take hundreds of years to biodegrade (UNESCO, 1994). Some materials, like plastic, do not actually biodegrade but break into thousands of miniscule pieces that can find their way into the food chain (National Geographic, 2010).

Waste of resources and air pollution

We need loads of resources in order to produce the materials that later end up as trash. Manufacturing requires energy and if this energy is derived by burning 'brown energies' like coal or oil, harmful emissions like carbon dioxide (CO₂) are released into the atmosphere. An over proportionate amount of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere lead to global rising temperatures. In turn, global warming causes rising sea levels as well as weather system disruptions which reportedly are responsible for natural disasters (IPCC, 2012).



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