



Hazardous Waste Management Program

GOVERNMENTS WORKING TOGETHER FOR
A HEALTHIER AND CLEANER KING COUNTY



2023

ANNUAL

REPORT

ONE VISION

Our Journey

As I reflect on the journey of the Hazardous Waste Management Program in 2023, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of pride and optimism.

In the face of both local and global challenges concerning toxic chemicals, our Program strives to bring hope and progress to King County. We work tirelessly to safeguard the health of our communities and protect our precious ecosystems from the dangers of toxic exposure. As a mission-driven regional coalition, we tackled the root causes of public health issues while advocating for environmental justice and confronting challenges with unwavering resolve.

We have made significant progress towards fulfilling our vision of a clean and healthy Puget Sound region. From policy initiatives to prevention programs and collection services, every action we take is guided by our mission to eliminate hazardous material risks for all who live, play, and work in King County.

As we increase our understanding of the impacts of emerging chemicals, upstream solutions are critical to eliminating hazardous material exposure. Our initiatives involve advocating for safer alternatives, addressing root causes, and collaborating with partners across the region to advocate for innovative and sustainable solutions.

On the downstream front, we remain dedicated to removing hazardous materials from the waste stream through public education and Extended Producer Responsibility programs, covering a spectrum from batteries, paint, and mercury-containing lights to household hazardous waste. This comprehensive approach ensures that our efforts extend beyond mere mitigation to proactive prevention, safeguarding public health and environmental integrity for generations to come.

However, our journey does not end here. As we move forward, we will continue to build on lessons learned to enhance our operations, amplify our impact, and maximize the value of our resources. Our focus spans from refining services and data collection to fostering deeper community engagement and partnerships.



I am grateful to our Program staff, as well as our dedicated partners and supporters, for their unwavering commitment to our mission and vision. It is through your passion, dedication, and tireless efforts that we have been able to achieve so much in 2023.

Together, let us continue to inspire change, foster innovation, and build a brighter, safer, and more sustainable future for generations to come.

With gratitude and determination,

Maythia Airhart
Director, Hazardous Waste Management Program

Our Coalition

The strength of the Haz Waste Program comes, in part, from its structure. The Program is comprised of a regional coalition of government agencies, all of whom work together on a common goal: to make the Puget Sound region the cleanest in the country.

Five coalition partners provide oversight, strategic guidance, and accountability through a multi-jurisdictional Management Coordination Committee (MCC): King County Solid Waste Division, Public Health – Seattle & King County, City of Seattle Public Utilities, Sound Cities Association, and King County Water and Land Resources Division.



The Program coordinates and collaborates across coalition partners to protect public health and the environment. Together, we work to meet the needs of our communities and protect the environment in our region by leveraging our resources, effecting system change, and addressing disproportionality in our services and community outcomes.

2023 proved to be a year of great change and significant progress, and the MCC thanks the amazing Program leadership and staff for their work and dedication.

Susan Fife-Ferris
MCC Chair, Seattle Public Utilities

ELIMINATING TOXIC EXPOSURES



Though lead poisoning is preventable, it remains one of the most common childhood health problems worldwide.

When health care providers in King County find elevated blood lead levels in children, Haz Waste Program investigators are sent to their homes to find potential sources of lead poisoning. The Program conducts hundreds of these investigations every year, inspecting household items such as cooking pots and cosmetics for lead content.

Through our in-home lead investigations, the team discovered a troubling concentration of lead exposure cases in the Afghan immigrant community. Program staff and community members acted with urgency to collaborate on a solution.



The Program worked side-by-side with the Afghan Health Initiative and the Afghan community to provide in-home environmental assessments. We also coordinated with our partners to offer public education about the sources and effects of lead exposure through native-language workshops, instructional videos, and broad outreach efforts.

Working with researchers at the University of Washington, we tested cookware collected from homes and retailers, then we shared our data with stakeholders and presented our findings at scientific conferences throughout the country. Our findings prompted a notice from the federal Food and Drug Administration alerting the public about imports of unsafe cookware.



This work also has drawn the attention of local news media, as well as persuaded online stores such as Amazon and Etsy to remove listings for cookware that the Program identified as containing lead.

We know that exposure to even small amounts of lead can cause serious health problems for children, such as damage to the brain and slowed development. Community members helped us identify exposure risks, and we responded by initiating changes to the systems that unintentionally perpetuated those risks. Because of this work, children and families in King County and beyond will be safer and healthier.

HOLDING PRODUCERS RESPONSIBLE



Some common household products, like cosmetics, paints, and batteries, can contain hazardous ingredients.

From creation to use and disposal, these products need to be safely managed throughout their lifecycles to protect the health of people, wildlife, and the environment.

Often, the responsibility of safely handling and disposing products falls directly onto the people who use them, and the cost is passed onto the public. But with new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) practices and regulatory changes, manufacturers and distributors are taking on a larger share of the burden.

In 2023, the Haz Waste Program delivered safe product management solutions to protect the Puget Sound region. Several pieces of legislation that the Program supported are now signed into law in Washington state:

- A ban on the sale and distribution of cosmetics and personal care products that contain toxic materials linked to harmful impacts on health.
- New protections against cancer-causing chemicals in paints, inks, and pigments.
- The creation of a new battery stewardship program in which all producers selling batteries in the state are participants.

Initiatives like these ensure the responsibility of safe management is spread equitably across a product's lifecycle. Ultimately, people in Washington and elsewhere are assured that the products they buy are safely managed, and businesses can make or sell products that cause less harm.

In the future, Haz Waste will continue to advance more EPR and safer product policies.



INNOVATION IN ACTION



The Haz Waste Program's most innovative work springs from the interests, concerns, and ideas of the people we serve.

The Program's mission always has been to protect public health and the environment. But how we accomplish that mission must be adaptable to people's evolving needs.

It's that focus on people that led to a project that removes harmful degreaser chemicals from auto repair shops. The project is part of a collaborative study with the University of Washington Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences. The study looks at how degreasers used at auto shops affect the health of the workers who use them. From the results, we can identify safer alternatives that help protect workers from exposure to harmful chemicals.



Then we connect with small businesses and incentivize their transition to safer products. Thanks to these coordinated efforts, some of the workers in King County who are most vulnerable to toxic exposure can do their jobs without significantly harming their health.

Maintaining our current partnerships is essential to meaningful service, but sometimes new connections can help the Program expand its reach and impact. Such is the case in our multifamily housing project. Property managers of large residential complexes have a responsibility to provide safe, toxic-free spaces for their tenants, and the Program is well-positioned to help by contributing valuable resources. Our collaboration with Seattle Housing Authority, King County Housing, and other local property managers helps us address gaps in our outreach by connecting our services to this critical population.



Our experts guide housing staff as they integrate safe handling practices and disposal services into their business operations. Through this coordinated approach, we build trust with our partners and instill behavior change that boosts people's safety at home.

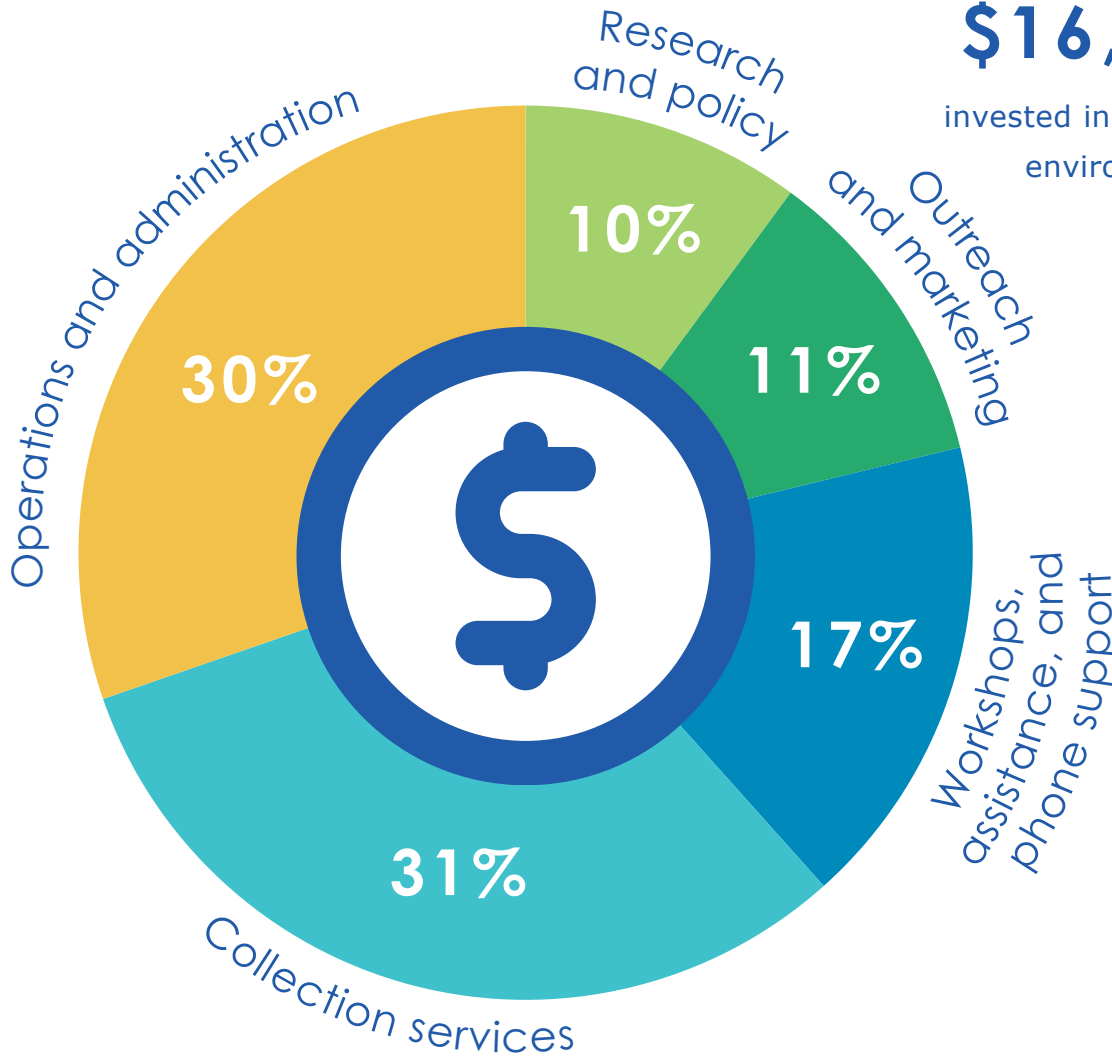
Embracing opportunities to forge partnerships helps us better understand the barriers to our services, which ultimately strengthens our outreach and education. We believe collaboration activates innovation, resulting in better outcomes for the people we serve.

OUR IMPACT

Every dollar that funds our Program comes from our ratepayers. Here is a by-the-numbers look at our impact.

\$16,918,253

invested in reducing human and environmental exposure to hazardous products and waste



1,266,234
connections made through broad outreach and digital media



10,048
residents, businesses, or families participated in a workshop, technical assistance, or phone call



85,742
residents or businesses used a collections service

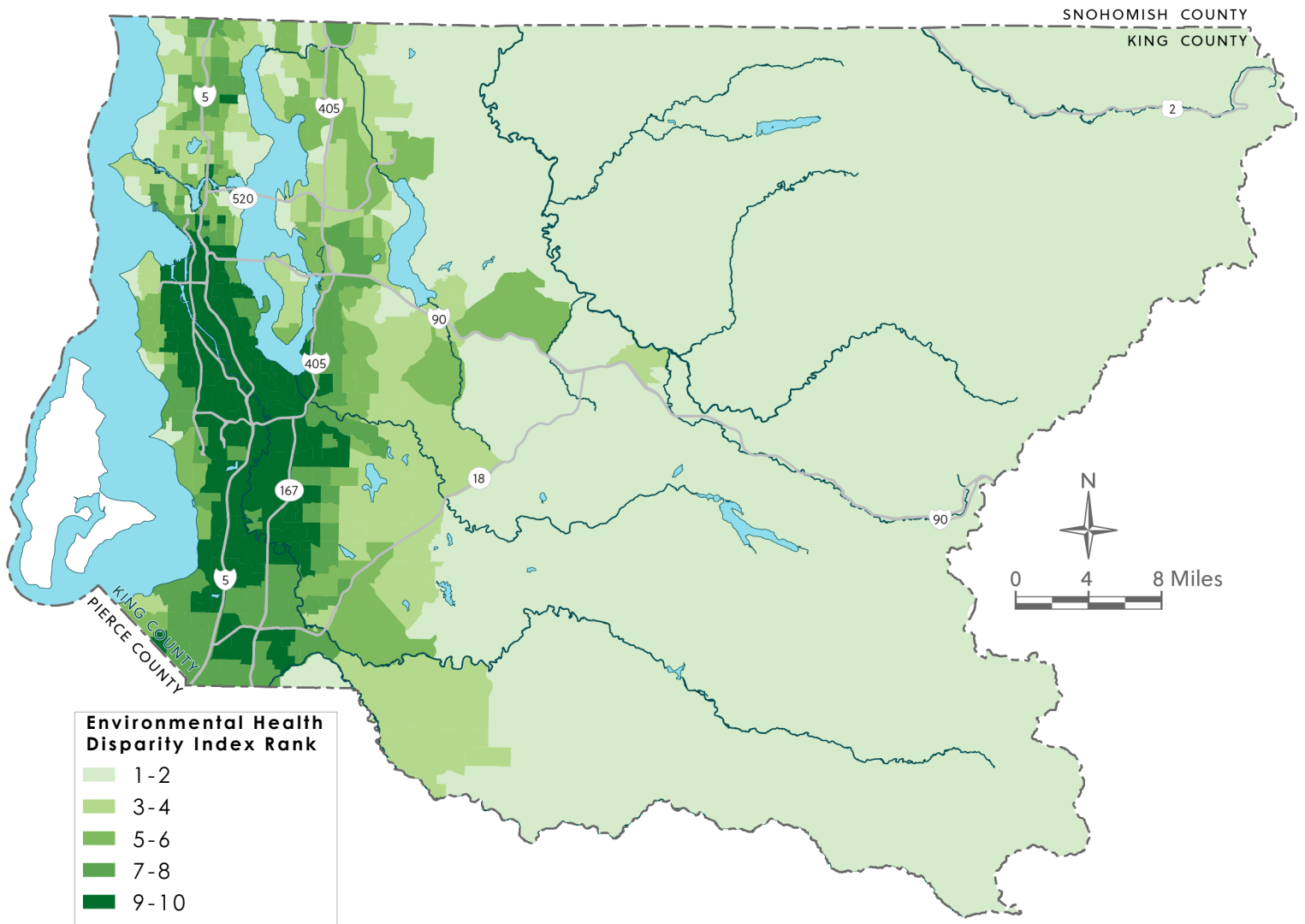


3,951,876
pounds of hazardous products diverted from improper storage or disposal

ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

Our Program is committed to ensuring that services are available to all who live, work, and play in King County. The following maps illustrate the Program's reach and equity in direct service delivery.

KING COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES*

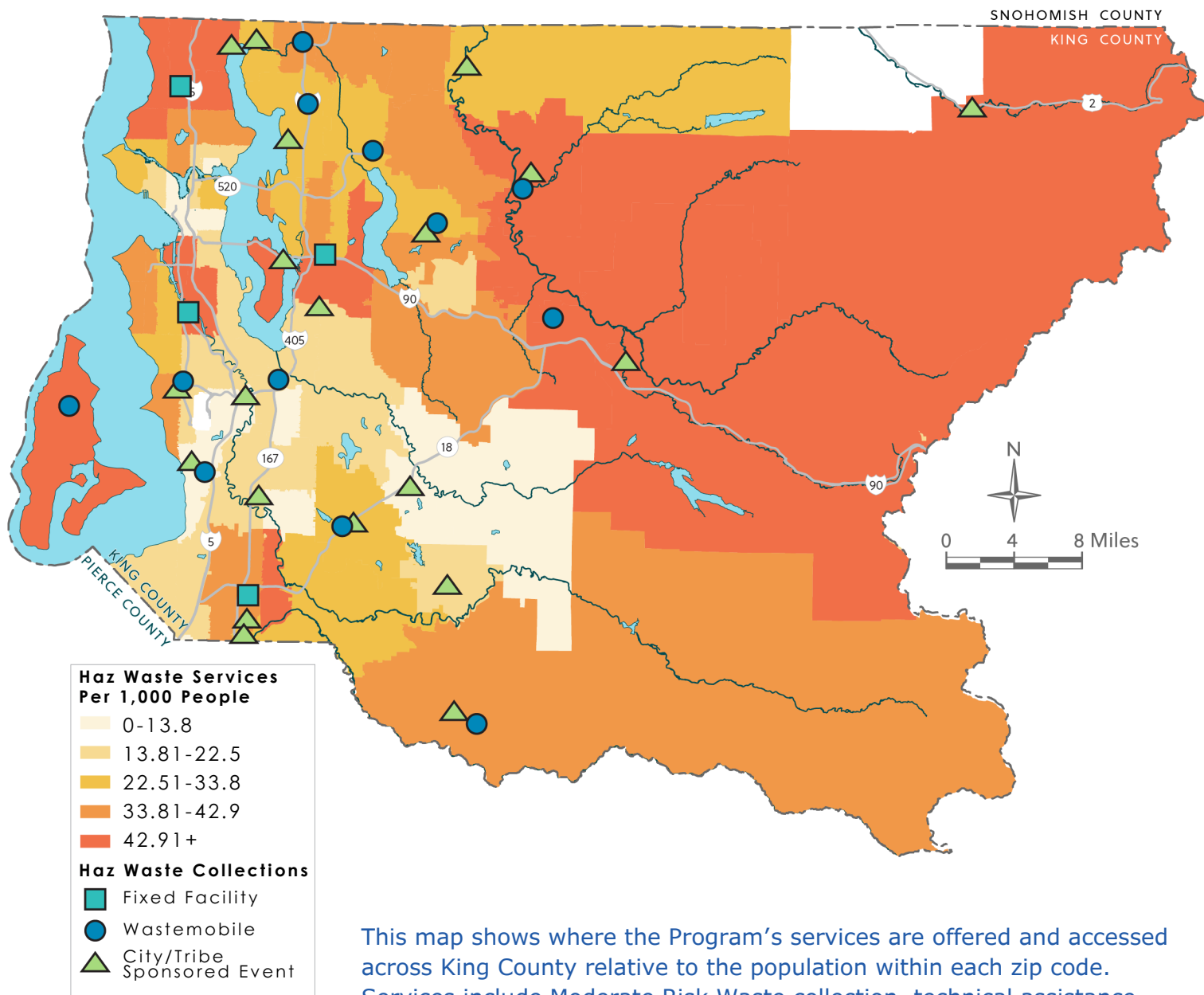


This map shows environmental health disparities across 19 different indicators. The higher the ranking, the more likely the communities living in the census tracts are vulnerable populations who are exposed to pollution and other toxics.

* - [WA DOH Environmental Health Disparities Map](#). The index is developed from 19 indicators. The higher the rank (darker color), the more highly impacted the area is by environmental health disparities compared to other census tracts in King County.

ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

KING COUNTY HAZARDOUS WASTE SERVICES**



This map shows where the Program’s services are offered and accessed across King County relative to the population within each zip code. Services include Moderate Risk Waste collection, technical assistance, educational workshops, and phone support for residents and businesses. These services represent a subset of the Program’s work.

** – Data are displayed in quintiles, with each color representing 20% of King County zip codes. Customer counts are aggregated across all Haz Waste direct customer services and contracted partners. Services include Moderate Risk Waste facilities, Wastemobile, workshops, technical assistance, lead investigation visits, calls to hotlines, and city/tribe sponsored collection and education events. Customers may have accessed more than one service. Zip code data is missing from 6% of customers. Map does not include marketing, tabling events, policy, community engagement, or research work.