Q&A: WASTE MANAGEMENT & COVID-19 IN SINGAPORE

1. Has waste management been classed as an essential service in your country?
   Under the Singapore Statutes, only the Public Waste Collection is the one deemed as essential service.

2. How many workers are affected by the current situation / are you operating with a reduced workforce?
   Our workers in the public waste collection are the ones mostly affected by Malaysia’s movement control order.
   
   a. **What special measures have you taken to enable operations to continue with a reduced workforce?**
      - For professionals/executives, the government has imposed compulsory safe distancing so most people are telecommuting if work can be done away from office.
      - For the reduced workforce, currently they are working on extended hours to fulfil public cleansing and waste services.

   b. **What extra health and safety precautions have you taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your waste workforce?**
      - To reduce the chances for exposure being out and about, we have implemented work from home rotations for all support staff based at the office.
      - In Sg, there's a Stay home notice (not allowed to step out of their residence) for travellers who returned from overseas travel, Waste management Companies have already enforced all necessary government restrictions on all its employees.
      - Meetings with external parties or even internal exco have been put on hold during this period. But if really necessary to conduct urgent face-to-face meetings, they are kept to the minimum with no more than 10 personnel in attendance.
      - Practice social distancing minimum of 1 metre for all meetings (apart from conducting them in smaller groups of no more than 10 personnel), meetings and work interactions.
      - Active monitoring of staff health – checking staff temperatures at the offices, as well as developed proper flow of communicating and reporting on any potential health risk or symptoms from our frontliners and employees. Any
staff found with symptoms are immediately sent for medical check-ups as well as sent home for quarantine where necessary to prevent infecting others.

- Series of communication for both office and field workers were developed to share on prevention tips as well as practices to stay safe and avoid the COVID-19 infection: how to wear and properly dispose gloves, how to wear and properly dispose masks, how to properly wash hands, safe practices at work and at home, how to look out for symptoms, how to report on any suspected cases, etc.

- All employees are instructed to avoid crowded places and gatherings during their rest days

c. Have you / will you, scale back your waste collection frequency?
- No, although companies feedbacked that alternate day collection will be able to sustain the remaining workforce, because there are service levels and schedules as expected of them under the Contractual Agreement with NEA.

3. How is your system coping with the increase in face masks and other PPE in household waste?

a. Do face masks continue to go into residual waste, or have you introduced any special measures for the separate collection of face masks?
- No, face masks and any other waste such as tissues from household or businesses, with potential exposure to unchecked COVID-19 contamination will be managed like any other non-contaminated municipal waste.

- Residents and the Public are advised and reminder to dispose their mask and tissues properly.

b. Have you made any special communications to the general public, for example, do you ask them to make fewer trips to the recycling stations, or to avoid trips to the tips/drop-off centres to get rid of bulky waste items
- No, because our residential bins are chute systems so they don’t have to go out of their house or it will be at their doorstep. For recyclables, there are blue bins situated at the foot of the blocks. So minimum travelling is required.

c. Are people being given special instructions on how to deal with possibly contaminated waste?
For collectors and cleaners, yes. Public is more of correct disposal.

4. Do recycling centres remain open to the general public?
- No
5. Have the international travel restrictions caused any interruptions with sending waste for processing overseas, importing/exporting waste? How are you managing the waste you cannot ship overseas?
   - Yes, the international travel restriction has affected the import / export of waste on top of the existing bans. The companies may have diversify or go into retrenchment to reduce overhead.

6. Are you incinerating (if capacity exists) more MSW than previously?
   - I think the quantity is still the same, as we do not have a landfill to dispose waste to begin with.