

THE PANDEMIC EXPONENTIALLY INCREASES MEDICAL WASTE AND REDUCES TOURISM WASTE



The impact of solid waste management generated by the pandemic is becoming increasingly evident. Medical material, personal protective equipment, household and business waste have increased between 18% to 425% according to a recent study. Daily production of covid-19 waste material is estimated to have increased globally from 200 tons per day to 29,000 tons per day between February and

September 2020. In contrast, blocking and social isolation measures reduced the volume of commercial and tourism waste.

The reduction in waste from the retail and hospitality sectors has occurred particularly in tourist cities. Other important changes that have been made in waste management related to food waste during the pandemic, as **international organizations and governments in different countries have begun to implement various initiatives in response to the situation.**

Pandemic

The policies related to plastic product reduction and waste recycling have stagnated.

The new study says that the pandemic has brought with it "specific challenges" and, in some ways, "has led to the stagnation of policies related to plastic product reduction and waste recycling." Researchers from Macau University of Science and Technology and Tsinghua University have systematically studied the potential impact of the pandemic on waste generation and treatment, and the findings have been published in *Frontiers of Environmental Science & Engineering*.

The pandemic has changed our lifestyle and even the environment around us. Some of the aspects are positive such as the reduction of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions and the alleviation of water pollution were a fact during the first months of the pandemic. The most obvious negative fact is that the production of waste related to the prevention of the virus has increased significantly.

Hundreds of Billions of Face Masks

The main component of the disposable face masks that a large part of the world's population uses every day is plastic fiber, and hundreds of billions of them are used every month across the globe. As an example, mask production in China in March 2020 exceeded 100 million. Before the pandemic, according to the authors of the study, the world was already producing more than 300 million tons of plastic every year.

Masks are not recyclable. In addition, the increase in cases has resulted in hospitals, health centers and also households producing a huge amount of covid-19-related waste, such as infected masks, gloves, test materials and protective equipment, which could not only contaminate the environment, but also have the risk of spreading diseases.

The spread of covid-19 has also changed household consumption behaviors. People are buying more

through the internet. As a result of this increase in online shopping, there may be an increase in the amount of disposable plastic waste, "which appears to conflict with previous plastic restriction policies."

In addition, the implementation of quarantines and isolation policies might have led to a certain amount of food waste, but in the meantime, it can also help people to improve the awareness of reducing food waste, for which some campaigns have been launched by governments and organizations.

One of the problems is that they may far exceed the available capacity of waste management systems. Therefore, "strategies and plans for emergency medical waste management during and after the pandemic need to be updated". Many countries have adjusted or updated their emergency waste management policies. In the authors' opinion, the study provides "useful information to help effectively manage solid waste during and after the pandemic."

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