

Inadequate control of hazardous waste

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There is still hazardous waste that is not collected or properly handled. Control of the export of hazardous waste is also inadequate. - The Ministry of the Environment must monitor this area closely with respect to developing the regulations, supervision and information, says Auditor General Jørgen Kosmo.

Document 3:7 (2011-2012) The Office of the Auditor General's investigation into the management of hazardous waste was submitted to the Storting on 31 January 2012.

Even though there has been a reduction in the amount of hazardous waste with unknown handling, the investigation shows that a great deal of electronic waste is not collected. Waste that is not collected is exported illegally, stored or ends up in residual waste.

Importers and manufacturers of electrical and electronic products are responsible for the waste from their products. The authorities have uncovered serious faults and deficiencies in their control of take-back companies that are tasked with ensuring proper handling of the waste.

The Office of the Auditor General's investigation has also found major weaknesses in the Norwegian Maritime Directorate's follow-up and control of the collection of hazardous waste from shipping in Norwegian ports. This increases the risk of discharges of oil and chemicals into the sea. The Office of the Auditor General expects the Ministry of the Environment to follow up the Norwegian Maritime Directorate more actively in order to ensure better control in this area.

The investigation shows that some of the hazardous waste produced in Norway is illegally exported, and that some of it ends up in developing countries that are not capable of handling it properly. The Norwegian Climate and Pollution Agency has entered into a collaboration with the Directorate of Customs and Excise, but few inspections of exports of hazardous waste have been carried out so far.

- Control of the export of hazardous waste is inadequate. More regular and risk-based supervision is necessary in order to stop illegal exports, Kosmo underlines.

Following the explosion at the Vest Tank facility in 2007, the environmental authorities have intensified their follow-up of treatment facilities for hazardous waste, but many enterprises still fail to comply with the regulations that are intended to contribute to the proper handling

of hazardous waste.

- The Norwegian Climate and Pollution Agency must further develop its supervision methods and strengthen its collaboration with the Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning in order to improve the supervision of types of waste for which the two agencies have joint responsibility, Kosmo says.

In its statement to the Office of the Auditor General, the Ministry of the Environment emphasises that the work on ensuring the proper handling of hazardous waste has high priority and that the area is subject to continuous follow-up. The Ministry also points out that several measures have been implemented. They include strengthening supervision and information aimed at the industry, work on amendments to the regulations in order to improve the collection of small electronic appliances, and the development of a new web-based tool for use by the municipalities. The Ministry of the Environment states that it will consider further follow-up of the Office of the Auditor General's comments in its work on a new white paper on waste.

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