

SPOKANE'S WASTE-TO-ENERGY (WTE) FACILITY



Seeking an equitable compliance pathway under Washington's Climate Commitment Act (CCA)

City of Spokane - January 2026



A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT



The State of Washington was a partner in the facility

Beginning operations in 1991, **Spokane's WTE facility is a critical component** of a comprehensive regional solid waste management system.

The **State of Washington provided \$60 million** grant from the sale of \$450 million in bonds to support construction of the facility as part of voter-approved State Referendum 39 in 1980.



WTE **protects Spokane's sole-source drinking source**, the Spokane Valley – Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer.

- **Capacity**

Processes ~ 250,000 tons of municipal solid waste annually from the Spokane region.

- **Energy Generation**

Generates ~ 150 gigawatt hours of electricity per year, enough to power 13,000 homes.

- **Regional Service**

Serves the City of Spokane, Spokane County, and several smaller municipalities. The WTE also provides needed special services beyond the region including:

- Law enforcement - narcotics, evidence, weapons
- Federal and international regulated waste - airlines, cargo and cruise ships, Antarctica research stations, pharmaceutical takebacks.

LIFECYCLE ASSESSMENT (LCA) STUDY

A 2024 Department of Ecology study conducted by CDM Smith compared Spokane's WTE facility to three regional landfills. Using a 20-year Global Warming Potential (GWP), the **WTE provides the greatest net reduction** in GHG emissions compared to landfills.

[Read the vetted and peer-reviewed report.](#)



A PATH TO AN EQUITABLE LEGISLATIVE SOLUTION

Despite its environmental benefits, Spokane's WTE facility is the only municipal solid waste system in Washington currently subject to the CCA's "Cap and Invest" costs.

- **Exemption Gap**

CCA provides **exemptions for landfills** and alternative compliance pathways for electric utilities, from which the **WTE facility was excluded**.

- **Financial Burden**

Spokane-area residents face an **estimated \$4 million to \$8 million increase** in annual compliance costs that no other Washington residents pay.

- **Economic Justice**

The potential 20% increase in utility bills **disproportionately affects Spokane**, where the Median Household Income (MHI) is 24% lower than the state average.

- **Environmental Justice**

Trucking waste to another jurisdiction will increase emissions and **shift the burden** of disposal to a community, with even lower income than Spokane.

PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE SOLUTION

The City of Spokane is seeking **legislation in 2026 to provide a more equitable approach** to solid waste management that will also reduce carbon emissions under the CCA. This would allow the city time to continue assessing the feasibility of carbon capture and diversion of more waste to recycling and reuse ([HB 2416](#)/ [SB 6092](#)).

Alternative Compliance Schedule

The proposal requests no-cost carbon allowances on a declining schedule:

- **Initial Coverage** - The facility would receive no-cost allowances equal to 100% of its carbon emissions beginning January 1, 2027 through the second compliance period.
- **Gradual Decline** - At the beginning of the third compliance period, allowances would decrease to 97%, declining by 3% every subsequent compliance period.

Consequences of No Action

Failure to address this inequity places the future of the WTE system at risk:

- **Economic Loss** - The facility supports approximately 75 family-wage jobs and contributes \$75 million annually to the local economy.
- **Rising Costs** - Residents who can least afford it would face higher utility bills.
- **Environmental Impacts** - Without relief, the city will be pushed toward the poor choice of trucking to distant landfills and away from new and innovative solutions such as carbon capture and increased recycling efforts.