

Waste Can
Be Source
Of Fuel

Refuse may soon become a valuable commodity at the University of Michigan.

"The university has commissioned a study of the possibility of using refuse as a supplementary fuel to produce heat and electrical power needed to operate the campus," explains John P. Weidenbach, U-M director of physical properties.

Weidenbach emphasized that the overall system for converting solid waste to fuel would be a cooperative venture involving Washtenaw County, the city of Ann Arbor, and other governmental units.

"We are trying to determine whether it makes sense for the university to be a consumer of solid waste fuel," he said. "The larger question is whether it makes sense for the county to handle its waste in this manner."

According to Joseph W. Price, director of the Washtenaw County Department of Public Works, an engineering firm has been investigating various alternatives available to the county for disposal of its solid waste. The study is in compliance with a state law requiring all municipalities of over 10,000 population to submit to state health authorities a plan for organized solid waste disposal.

"At this point," Price said, "the gathered information indicates the conversion of refuse to a salable fuel is a realistic possibility."

Price said the county could build a processing plant to convert the solid waste to fuel, to which local refuse trucks would then haul their loads.

At the processing plant, non-combustible wastes such as metal and glass would be separated and perhaps sold for recycling. After the combustible wastes were processed, the resulting solid waste-fuel would be delivered to the university in fully enclosed trucks.

"We know roughly how much fuel the county can produce from its refuse and at what cost," Price said. "However, we do not know now whether we could get enough of our costs back to warrant the project."

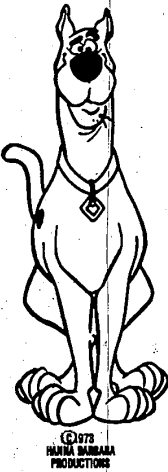
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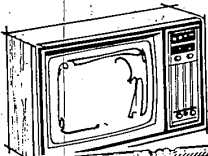


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