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## WTE plant helps to bankrupt Pa. city

By Vince Bond Jr.  
WRN reporter

The waste incinerator in Harrisburg, Pa. has burned through more than just garbage over the past four decades. It's burned through money, the patience of residents and now the city's solvency.

Earlier this month, Harrisburg became the first state capital in memory – perhaps in history – to declare bankruptcy, thanks to the \$310 million debt that hangs over the Harrisburg Resource Recovery Facility.

The incinerator has been a money pit in Harrisburg since it was built in 1972, with the biggest chunk of investment coming when the city spent \$125 million to rebuild the facility in 2003.

Finally, on Oct. 12, with \$65 million of its debt due, the City Council voted to declare Chapter 9 bankruptcy instead of adopting a recovery plan developed by the state and Mayor Linda Thompson.

The decision has touched off a legal battle. The mayor refused to sign the declaration, calling it illegal, and a week later, the state enacted a takeover of the city's finances. Gov. Tom Corbett is now able to declare a state of fiscal emergency and take money management responsibilities from the city. Under the law, the governor also can appoint a receiver to lead the fiscal recovery.

Despite the filing, the city isn't "in a state of bankruptcy" and is still "paying its bills," said Robert Philbin, Harrisburg's director of communications and a senior adviser to the mayor.

Philbin said the mayor's recovery plan involves selling the plant, which would trim about half of

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## Compost center deaths leave many questions



Courtesy, Kern County (Calif.) Fire Department

Inside this 8-foot-deep drainage tunnel at Community Recycling & Resource Recovery Inc. in Lamont, Calif., two brothers were overcome by noxious gases on Oct. 12 and later died. The deaths of Armando Ramirez, 16, and Eladio Ramirez, 22, are being investigated by two state agencies as well as the federal Department of Labor.

## Tests may take 90 days

Initial report of toxic gas exposure inconclusive on autopsies; more tests ongoing

By Shawn Wright  
WRN reporter

It's a tragedy that has rippled through a California town and around the composting community – two brothers are dead after apparently inhaling fatal gases while cleaning out a drainage tunnel at a

composting facility.

Sixteen-year-old Armando Ramirez, who was working under false papers that said he was 30, and his 22-year-old brother Eladio Ramirez were the victims at Community Recycling & Resource Recovery Inc. in Lamont, Calif., on Oct. 12.

Autopsies were performed on the two brothers by the Kern County Coroner's Office, but proved inconclusive as to cause of death, said Ray Pruitt, public information officer for the Kern County Sheriff's Office.

"Oftentimes, the pathologist cannot determine the cause and manner of death based on the initial autopsy," he said. "So, the pathologist will request additional testing ... to get information that will help them make a final determination."

Further toxicology and microscopic testing will be done, Pruitt said, but it generally takes up to 90 days to get the results.

Dean Fryer, a spokesperson for

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## Waste Management, Recyclebank see benefits from combo

By Jim Johnson  
WRN senior reporter

America's largest solid waste management company is teaming up with the nation's largest recycling rewards program in a move that's being called a game changer by one of the participants.

Waste Management Inc. is making an undisclosed investment in Recycle Rewards Inc., which operates the Recyclebank rewards program. It plans to open the program to its millions of customers.

Recyclebank, in turn, is taking over Waste Management's Gree-

nopolis recycling program, which promotes recycling, in part, through a network of about 1,000 reverse vending machines that accept bottles and cans.

"Certainly this is a game changer for us," said Jonathan Hsu, CEO of Recyclebank. "We have just over 3 million members right

now and Waste Management is giving us the opportunity to roll it out to over 20 million households."

Waste Management, through the deal, gains exclusive access to Recyclebank in the markets it serves. The nation's largest trash company has a goal of essentially tripling the amount of recy-

clables it handles by 2020 compared to 2007.

"What it will do is ... help us go in there with a better service offering to help us gain and grow our company and increase our recycling rates," said Paul Pistono,

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### All over the map

See where the 86 active waste-to-energy sites in the United States are located.  
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wasterecyclingnews.com



### Covanta invests in new market

Company opens an e-waste recycling facility in Philadelphia. Page 3

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