HAZARDOUS WASTE GENERATORS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES OF ALASKA
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Hazardous waste regulation is vital for protecting both human health and the environment. In tribal villages of Alaska, most don’t have waste management and all types of wastes including hazardous materials (HAZMATs) are simply piled in an open dump. Open dumps don’t have monitoring nor have a fence that prevents trash from getting scattered. They are mainly located close to villages and studies have shown that households living near those open dumps have experienced negative health outcomes including low birth weights and respiratory cancer. The EPA is currently carrying out a pilot study that will research cost-effective ways to backhaul HAZMATs from rural tribal villages to major nearby cities such as Anchorage and Seattle. The purpose of my study was to assist with EPA’s backhaul program and to investigate what types of industries are generating HAZMATS in tribal communities as well as what types of HAZMATs they are creating. To accomplish this, I used the list of all the generators in Alaska and filtered the ones that were close to the tribal villages in the EPA’s backhaul program. Furthermore, I reached out to those organizations through email and phone calls to found out the types of activities they do and the types of HAZMATs they generate. My findings showed that most of the generators were Very Small Quantity Generators (VSQG) and mainly generate universal wastes which are considered hazardous materials but not acutely hazardous (acute hazardous waste can have a serious health impact even in very small amounts). By improving hazardous waste regulations and waste management in rural villages of Alaska can greatly benefit the many communities both in terms of environmental quality and overall public health.