

CONFERENCE AND EVENT WASTE REDUCTION



Thurston County Solid Waste

Waste reduction, the combination of waste prevention and recycling efforts, makes good financial sense. In addition to financial advantages, waste prevention benefits the environment, benefits society, and your company establishes itself as a good community citizen, providing immeasurable, lasting rewards.

Conference and Event Waste Reduction

TIPS FROM THURSTON COUNTY SOLID WASTE

Waste reduction begins by understanding what is being purchased, how goods are used, and then is put to use by finding ways to eliminate, reduce, reuse, and recycle materials. A good strategy is to target the largest components in the waste stream, and implement the easy waste reduction steps first. Below are some ideas to help you identify waste reduction opportunities at your business.

WASTE PREVENTION

Planning

- Choose an event site that has a recycling program or is willing to coordinate with you to meet your waste reduction goals. Visit the EPA's website "Green Conference Initiative" and "Planning Environmentally Aware Events" for assistance with environmentally friendly practices, event planning, accommodations, food service, and event space.
- Avoid direct mail campaigns for marketing your event.
 - Consider telemarketing, placing an ad in a newspaper, trade publications, organizational newsletters, and the radio.
 - Put up posters in locations your audience will likely frequent.
 - Submit news releases to the chamber of commerce and other professional organizations who may be interested.

Food Service

- Ask for condiments and beverages to be provided in non-disposable containers or packages.
- Coordinate with a local food bank to donate unserved meal portions.
- Request that meals are prepared with local, organics produce if possible.
- Find a vendor that will use reusable (durable) plates and flatware.

- Plan snacks that are not individually packaged and ask for items that can be purchased in bulk such as fruit, cheese, crackers, and muffins.

Lodging

- Select a site that is convenient for guests staying in a hotel to commute by bus or foot.
- Choose lodging that has a recycling program for guests and practices waste reduction techniques (e.g., optional towel reuse, bulk dispensers for soaps and shampoo, newspapers on request).

Meeting Rooms

- Print conference material on double-sided paper that is recycled.
- Offer telephone or email registration instead of a mail-back form.
- Ask speakers to use an overhead projector to present material instead of using a flip-chart or hand-outs. Remind speakers when they are booked that most hand-outs end up in the waste stream.
- Make promotional banners and wall posters that are non-dated, so they can be reused in the future.

General

- Give yourself some public relations time. Announce your efforts to plan a green event and ask for cooperation from exhibitors to follow your lead.
- As exhibitors to minimize promotional gifts or handouts that are likely to end up in the garbage.
- Remind people to take only what they need and to use the recycling receptacles.
- Give participants a name badge encased in a reusable plastic holder. Remind people during registration to return these at the end of the conference. Designate a place for return collection, and reuse the badge at future conferences.

RECYCLING

Planning

- Determine the variety of recyclables that will be produced.
- Determine what types of materials can be recycled in order to plan what type of food service you want. For example, if you can have glass and aluminum pick-up; ask that all

beverages be offered this way when bulk forms are not available (such as pitchers of orange juice or iced tea).

- Ensure that recycling bins will be well-marked, consistent, and visible.
- Recycling bins should be placed in well traveled areas such as a stage, restrooms, food stalls, entrances, exits, and near trash containers.
- Advertise the availability of recycling facilities at the event. An announcement could be made at a break in the event or advertised at the entrance.
- Once you have a plan for recycling, make appropriate signs with instructions for proper sorting, or ask if the hotel or conference center has signs available. Thurston County Solid Waste also has free signage available.
- Recruit volunteers to educate persons at the recycling stations and perform other related activities (e.g., distribute information at the entrance, obtain sponsors, transfer recyclables from bins to collection points).

Food Service

- Make sure vendors have recycling guidelines with up-to-date procedures.
- Select vendors that will serve items in recyclable or compostable containers and that use durable dishware and flatware, if possible.

Meeting Rooms

- Ask exhibitors to provide their hand-out information on recycled and recyclable paper, or have them send electronic copies of information to a list of emails collected from attendees.
- Ask speakers to limit their use of handouts.
- Ask speakers and participants to avoid printing on “neon” or “astrobright” paper because it causes problems in the paper recycling process.
- Since the majority of waste is paper, place recycling bins in all the meeting rooms, and make sure the bins are clearly marked.

COMPOSTING

Food Service

- Contact your waste hauler about collection service for food scraps, food-solid paper, and yard debris that can be commercially composted.
- Provide organics collection containers, with clear signage, for guests and food vendors.
- If you cannot use durable dishware, consider requiring food vendors to use compostable flatware and food containers.

OUTREACH

Internal

- Keep employees informed and involved – provide regular updates to employees and management about waste reduction efforts. Everyone likes to hear a good word, and employees need to know that their commitments help achieve program goals. Positive communication and employee recognition (via newsletters, email announcements, recognition events) are critical to long-term success of waste reduction programs.
- Allow people involved with your business a chance to suggest ways to reduce waste. Consider operating a suggestion system that offers recognition for good waste reduction ideas.
- Have an annual employee training workshop to keep employees informed about reuse and recycling policies and procedures.
- Train new employees. Let them know they are expected to use resources carefully and to fully participate in waste reduction programs. Explain how to prevent waste and how to recycle materials.

External

- Let the public know about your waste reduction efforts. Send news releases about your efforts to local papers, and trade and environmental publications.
- Join the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) WasteWise program. The WasteWise program is a free program open to businesses, schools, local governments, and non-profit organizations of all sizes and from all industry sectors. WasteWise helps to meet goals to reduce and recycle municipal solid waste and selected industrial wastes. By participating in WasteWise your business can:
 - Reduce purchasing and disposal costs.
 - Access a toll-free helpline for technical assistance.
 - Receive an Annual Climate Profile describing greenhouse gas reduction.

- Obtain public recognition in WasteWise publications, case studies, and meetings.
- Network in member and regional forums.
- Receive WasteWise Awards that recognize outstanding achievements.
- Acquire outreach and educational materials.

For more waste reduction ideas and assistance visit the “Business Waste Reduction” link of www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org or call (360) 867-2491.