

GENERAL BUSINESS 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.

General Business 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.

PURCHASING

- Establish purchasing guidelines to encourage waste prevention (durable, concentrated, reusable, and high-quality).
- Centralize purchasing to eliminate unnecessary purchases and ensure that waste reduction purchasing policies are followed.
- Track material usage to optimize ordering.
- Consider length of warranty and availability of repair services when purchasing equipment.
- Substitute less toxic materials for toxic materials (e.g., vegetable-based inks, water-based glue, markers, and paints).
- Use plastic trash can liners made of recycled HDPE instead of ones made with LDPE or LLDPE. They contain fewer raw materials, work equally well for most uses, and generally cost less.
- Order merchandise with minimal packaging or fewer layers of packaging. Contact manufacturers directly and express purchase preferences. Remember to vote with your dollars by buying products with minimal packaging or packaging containing recycled content.
- Avoid bright or deep-toned paper.
- “Astrobrights” and other brightly-colored papers can cause problems at a paper recycling mills. Pastel colors (light green, light blue, canary yellow, light pink) are less of a problem and stand out just as well. And, they cost less!

- Request that deliveries be shipped in returnable containers.
- Order supplies by voice mail or electronic mail.
- Use optical scanners, which give more details about inventory, allowing more precise ordering.

PACKAGING

- Eliminate unneeded packaging or layers of packaging.
- Use lightweight packaging to conserve materials.
- Use reusable boxes and mailbags for shipping to branch offices, shops, and warehouses.
- Ship products to your customers in the boxes that you receive from your suppliers. Set up a place to store these reusable boxes. Ask your customers to return boxes for reuse. You will save by not having to buy as many boxes.
- Encourage suppliers to use reusable totes or boxes, rather than sending you disposable boxes that you have to break down and recycle.
- Print messages on products to encourage customers to recycle the packaging.
- Reuse packing materials or find someone who can.
- Use materials already on hand or loose-fill packaging material, rather than buying new. One popular low-cost option is shredded office paper.
- Set up a system for returning cardboard boxes and packing peanuts to distributors for reuse.
- Return, reuse, and repair wooden pallets and spools, and use a clamp system instead of new pallets for outgoing shipments.
- Purchase supplies with recycled content.

WRITING & PRINTING PAPER

- Make double-sided (duplex) copies whenever possible.
- Reuse envelopes and use two-way envelopes.
- Circulate memos, periodicals, and reports rather than distributing individual copies.

- Use voice or electronic mail, shared computer drives, or post memos on a central bulletin board.
- Make scratch pads from used paper.
- Use outdated letterhead for internal memos.
- Eliminate unnecessary forms. Double-side forms or redesign them to fit on a half sheet.
- Use narrow-ruled notebooks.
- Save and share documents on USB drives instead of printing hard copies.
- Use central files for hard copies.
- Print more words on each page by using narrower margins.
- Duplex your laser printer so that it automatically prints documents on both sides of the page.
- Proof documents on screen when possible and teach employees to use print preview and spell check before printing.
- Fill the printer with paper already used on one side and print drafts on the other side. (Set this as the default print and instruct employees to use the manual feed to use clean paper.)
- Use the same draft report for corrections by several people.
- Accept final in-house documents with hand corrections.
- Use executive summaries when possible and provide the entire document only upon request.

OVERSTOCKED & SURPLUS ITEMS

- Set up a surplus program for employees to exchange used items.
- Get rid of unwanted items, but remember that another organization might be able to use them.
- Advertise surplus and reusable items through a commercial waste exchange.
- Sell or give old furniture and equipment to employees or donate to a local charity.

EQUIPMENT

- Rent instead of buying equipment that is used only occasionally.
- Buy quality used or remanufactured office equipment.
- Invest in equipment that facilitates waste prevention such as:
 - High quality, durable, and repairable equipment.
 - Copiers and printers that make two-sided copies.
 - USB drives.
- Institute maintenance practices that prolong the life of copiers, computers, and other equipment.
- Reclaim reusable parts from old equipment.
- Use refilled or rebuilt fax and printer cartridges and other office supplies such as pens.
- Use retreaded tire on company vehicles. Rotate tires on a regular basis to prolong tire life. Keep tires properly inflated, this saves energy and improves wear.
- Install reusable heating, ventilation, and air conditioning filters.
- Purchase products that do not need batteries or do use solar energy, such as manual pencil sharpeners, staplers, and solar calculators.
- Use rechargeable batteries where practical.
- Use hand blowers or cloth towel dispensers in common bathrooms, or purchase recycled and unbleached paper towel rolls.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Get off unwanted mailing lists. Use the National Waste Prevention Coalition's website to get your name off national mailing lists and save your business staff time and disposal costs related to sorting and discarding junk mail.
- Use recycled-content for items related to intra- and inter-office communications.
- Use fax "stickies" instead of full page cover sheets, or even better, write or stamp the first page of the fax to convey transmission information.
- Invest in a program that allows faxing directly from your computer or send documents by email instead of printing a copy to fax.

- Use two-way or reusable envelopes when appropriate.
- Eliminate unnecessary elements such as envelopes by designing your mailing so the address can be printed right on the document that you are sending.
- Reuse old envelopes for internal mailings.
- Keep mailing lists current to avoid duplication or mailing invalid addresses.
- Don't pre-stuff packets for meetings and conferences. Let participants take handouts they think they will use.
- Use email and voice mail for interoffice messages.
- Circulate magazines and other subscriptions rather than ordering copies for individual employees.
- Call or mail postcards directly to senders asking that your name be removed from mailing lists.

FOOD & PERSONAL SERVICES

- Purchase less toxic cleaners.
- Dispense cleaning solutions in refillable containers like pump spray bottles. Use products in non-aerosol containers where possible.
- Encourage employees to bring their own mugs and utensils. Ask food vendors to offer discounts on beverages served in a customer's mug.
- Use durable towels, tablecloths, napkins, dishes, flatware, cups, and glasses.
- Buy company mugs; stop providing disposable cups.
- Buy reusable coffee filters, or use unbleached disposable filters that can be composted.
- Reuse trash can liners or eliminate them where possible. Stop using liners in cans with only dry trash.
- Consider using cloth roll towels or hot air dryers in restrooms.

CONSUMER CHOICES

- Encourage customers to bring their own bag(s), and compliment them when they do.
- Offer a rebate when they reuse grocery bags, containers, mugs, and cups.

- Offer customers waste prevention choices such as:
 - Items in bulk and concentrate.
 - Items in refillable containers.
 - Solar powered items.
 - Durable and repairable merchandise.
- If you serve beverages in cans or bottles, place recycling bins next to the garbage can in the dining area for empty beverage containers.
- Encourage your customers to return reusable items such as metal hangers to dry cleaners.

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.
- Teach your customers about the importance of waste prevention. Effective tools for getting the message across include:
 - Promotional campaigns.

- Brochures and newsletters (remember to use recycled-content paper).
 - Banners.
 - Newspaper ads.
 - Product displays.
 - Store signage.
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- 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.