

GROCERY 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.

Grocery 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

General Waste Prevention

- Pay attention to expiration dates and keep rotating products for use in the bakery to avoid having to throw them away.
- Use “ugly-but-edible” produce in the bakery or deli to produce salads and baked goods.
- Package leftover deli-case hot foods to be sold the next day as “take-out” in the cold case section.
- Train employees to rotate, wash, and trim produce properly.
- Use display tables that minimize handling and spoilage.
- Offer ‘ugly-but-edible’ produce, leftover deli food, and package pull-dated food to a local food bank.
- Reuse boxes in-house or donate to customers or a local food bank.
- Consider using plastic pallets. Repair broken pallets on-site or use a repair service.
- Improve handling practices that cause breakage. Ask suppliers to use sturdier pallets or take back the broken ones.
- Ask vendors to retrieve their boxes or sell to a reuse service.
- Sell reusable beverage cups or mugs to customers; provide employees with permanent cups or mugs.

- Purchase take-out containers that can either be recycled or composted. You can cover the cost of these items by slightly raising the price of take-out foods – most customers will not notice a minor increase.
- Ask your vendor to take back and refill cleaning product containers.
- Carefully inventory sales of magazines and journals to avoid over purchasing each month. Work with suppliers to allow the donation of unusable publications to schools, libraries, or other charitable organizations.

Pharmacy

- Use the first-in, first-out system to rotate chemical stocks. Pay attention to expiration dates.
- Buy drugs in container sizes that permit formulation of daily doses with the least quantity of excess product leftover.

RECYCLING

Examine Your Operations

- Assess your recycling opportunities in each portion of your operations: film processing, bakery, deli, grocery, pharmacy, and nursery/floral.
- Contact Thurston County Solid Waste or your waste hauler to find out what materials can be collected.
- Set-up centrally located recycling collection areas for customers and employees.
- Make sure all containers, including compactors, are clearly marked with signs.
- Educate employees about standards to ensure that all meat waste is discarded into a rendering bin.
- Choose a pallet repair service that accepts all wood waste and recycles what cannot be reused.

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 throughout the store, paying special attention to deli, bakery, meat processing, nursery/floral, and produce departments.
- Consider purchasing compostable deli/food containers and compostable flatware if you cannot use durable dishware.

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.