

MINNESOTA WASTE WISE
FACT SHEET
TEN EASY STEPS TO REDUCING WASTE

Step 1: Gain Management Support

Management support is critical to the success of your program. To gain support, communicate effectively and demonstrate how a waste prevention and recycling program can save the company money, improve employee morale and save natural resources.

Programs succeed best when management:

- Implements company-wide waste reduction and recycling policies.
- Allocates resources (personnel and money).
- Shows leadership through example — by reducing waste, recycling and buying recycled.
- Stays committed and involved
- Supports incentives to reward staff involvement.

Step 2: Choose a Coordinator

Select one person to coordinate the program. Choose someone enthusiastic and organized who communicates well with co-workers and management.

The coordinator will:

- Work with others to evaluate which materials can be reduced and recycled.
- Teach co-workers and management how to reduce, reuse and recycle waste.
- Coordinate activities with service providers and other company departments.
- Keep everyone in the company informed about the program goals and successes.

If your business has several departments, you may want to create a waste reduction and recycling team to work with the coordinator. The team should include someone from each department including management, maintenance, production, purchasing, personnel and food service.

Step 3: Perform a Waste Assessment

Evaluate your business throw-aways, what is recycled and how much your business pays for garbage service. A waste assessment will address:

- How much waste your business generates.
- Where, how and why waste is generated.
- What types of materials you are throwing away.
- Where your waste is going and how it is managed.
- How much your collection and disposal services cost.
- How much of your waste can be reduced and/or recycled.

Through this assessment, employees will become aware of the waste they create and how it is managed. The assessment will help staff target opportunities for reduction and recycling.

For each material identified during your waste assessment, think about the best management option:

- Reduce
- Reuse or donate
- Purchase requirements – made from recycled materials.
- Recycle
- Continue to dispose of it properly until there is a better option

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TEN EASY STEPS TO REDUCING WASTE CONTINUED

Step 4: How to Trim Your Trash

Waste reduction provides an effective way to lower your costs throughout all areas of your business, including offices, break room, building maintenance, shipping, manufacturing and equipment/vehicle maintenance.

Examples of waste reduction include:

- Using both sides of a sheet of paper when printing and copying.
- Bringing lunch in reusable containers.
- Purchasing or leasing washable, reusable cleaning cloths.
- Shipping products in returnable containers.
- Using raw materials efficiently.
- Avoiding fluid spills during equipment and vehicle maintenance.

Brainstorm with employees about your business' day-to-day operations and work together to identify other waste prevention opportunities.

Step 5: Design Your Recycling Program

Your next consideration when setting up your waste management program is the best method for getting recyclables to a market and how to efficiently collect and store these materials at your location. It is also important to determine if there is the potential to earn revenue on your recyclables and if so, do you want to pursue those options if possible?

Determine the Best Option for Getting Recyclables to Market:

Designing a Collection and Storage System

Every recycling program must include a convenient, efficient and clean materials collection and storage system.

Consider the following factors when designing your system:

- Keep the system simple and convenient for customers and employees.
- Determine when recyclable materials will be collected.
- Decide who will handle the recyclables at each step of the way.
- Select the type and size of recycling collection containers needed.
- Place the collection containers in a convenient and safe location.
- Choose bins that are consistent in appearance (color-coded, labeled) for easy recognition.
- Choose a location for storing recyclables once collected.
- Inquire about local zoning and/or fire code requirements related to the type and location of storage containers.

It is essential that all staff who handles the recyclables, whether employees or contracted custodial services, be trained to understand how the program works. Plan for staff turnover, and include components of the recycling program when training new custodial staff or hiring a new service.

Recycling programs should be designed with flexibility in mind. Be ready to change your initial practices as you gather information and learn new handling methods. For businesses that generate large quantities of materials, consider establishing a pilot program to work out potential problems before expanding the program company-wide.

Self-Hauling

For businesses that have amounts too small for a service provider to pick-up, consider self-hauling recyclables to a collection center. Consider the following factors:

- Where can the recyclables be brought?
- What are the market specifications for the recyclables?
- What are the potential revenues to offset the cost of collection and transportation?
- Are the markets reliable?
- Does your company have adequate labor and equipment to collect and transport the recyclables?

TEN EASY STEPS TO REDUCING WASTE CONTINUED

Choosing a Recycling Service Provider

Most businesses choose the convenience of having recyclables picked up by a recycling service, rather than bringing the materials to a drop-off location. Talk to your current waste hauler to determine if they provide recycling service. It is always a good idea to do comparison shopping to find the most complete, reliable and cost-effective collection service. Many waste haulers provide recycling service along with their trash collection program.

Questions to Ask Potential Recycling Service Providers:

- Have you worked with my type of business before?
- Do you have references and the appropriate licenses?

Questions to Ask Potential Recycling Service Providers:

- Have you worked with my type of business before?
- Do you have references?
- What materials do you collect?
- How should recyclables be sorted?
- Is there a minimum amount required for collection?
- Do you provide collection containers (desk paper trays, bins, barrels, dumpsters, outside storage containers, etc.)?
- How is the pick-up service scheduled (weekly, on-call, etc.)?
- Do you provide educational materials and recycling training?
- What are your payment terms?
- Do you require a contract for service?

Step 6: Purchase Environmentally Preferred Products

Waste reduction and recycling are integral parts of a successful waste management program. Support these activities and take your program one step further — exercise your purchasing power and choose environmentally preferred products. Environmentally preferred products and services have a reduced impact on the environment and human health.

Ensure That Your Purchases Support Your Waste Reduction and Recycling Efforts

- Make a company-wide commitment to purchase environmentally preferred products and services.
- Identify opportunities to purchase environmentally preferred products and services.
- Revise purchasing policies, ordering practices and product specifications.
- Set purchasing goals.
- With every purchase, ask the question, “Is there an alternative product available that meets our company’s needs and is a better choice for the environment?”

Questions to Consider Before Purchasing Any Product:

- Is the product non-hazardous or less hazardous than other choices?
- Is the product reusable, durable or easily repaired?
- Is the product made from recycled materials or renewable resources (such as plant-based raw materials)? Can it be recycled?
- Will a recycled-content product work in place of one made with virgin materials?
- Does the product conserve energy or water?
- Is the product refillable or available in bulk quantity to reduce packaging?
- Is product leasing an option? Will the manufacturer take it back?
- What happens to the product at the end of its life? Does it need special disposal?

Buy Recycled

Recycling is more than collecting materials to keep them out of the garbage. Materials must be processed and made into new products to complete the recycling loop. Buying recycled-content products is what makes recycling work. Look for opportunities to substitute recycled-content products throughout every area of your business. The quality of most recycled-content products is comparable or exceeds the quality of products made from virgin materials. Look for recycled-content office products, building materials, packaging, raw materials for manufacturing and other items made with recycled-content materials.

TEN EASY STEPS TO REDUCING WASTE CONTINUED

Examples of Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

Equipment

- Develop maintenance contracts and purchasing specifications for laser printers and copy machines that support the use of recycled-content paper and remanufactured toner cartridges.
- Purchase used equipment.
- Purchase or lease copiers and laser printers that automatically copy or print on both sides (duplex printing).

Supplies

- Specify chlorine free recycled-content paper and soy- or agri-based ink when placing printing orders.
- Purchase laser, copy and letterhead paper with 30 - 100% post-consumer recycled paper content.
- Contract with a janitorial service that uses less-hazardous (less toxic) or non-hazardous cleaners.
- Shop at reuse centers or through materials exchange programs.

Products

- Work with vendors who use waste prevention techniques, such as minimal packaging or returnable shipping containers and pallets.
- Manufacture products and packaging that can be reused or recycled.
- Evaluate all purchases – think about “cradle to grave” costs such as liability, environmental impacts and employee safety during the manufacture, use and disposal of a product.

Step 7: Kick Off Your Program

Employee participation is critical to the success of your program. Gain the support and active participation of upper management right away. When employees see their boss reducing, reusing and recycling, they are more likely to participate. Educate all employees about the program and make it easy for everyone to participate. Posting instructional signs throughout your business can provide an effective and easy way to educate staff.

Announce and Promote the Program

Make an announcement at your next staff meeting, post a message on company bulletin boards or send an e-mail notice announcing the start of the new or improved program. Follow these steps:

- Announce the commitment to reduce waste, recycle and purchase environmentally preferred products.
- Spell out the new program procedures clearly.
- Introduce the program coordinator and provide his or her phone number and/or e-mail address.
- Encourage employees to share innovative ideas and solutions.

Some businesses host a special event or staff party to kick-off the program. Promote your waste reduction and recycling program internally and throughout your community. Hang posters or banners throughout buildings or distribute buttons. Look for opportunities to include information about your program in community papers or company newsletters. Publicity materials and clip art are available through some of the county environmental office.

Hold Training Sessions

Staff meetings can provide an excellent time to hold training sessions. The coordinator and/or members of management should be prepared to answer questions, provide encouragement and discuss the program's successes and needs. It is often helpful to provide employees with a current list of materials that are accepted in the recycling program as well as those that are not accepted) and brief program instructions such as the collection locations and material handling methods.

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**TEN EASY STEPS TO REDUCING WASTE
CONTINUED**

Step 8: Track Program Successes

It is time to track successes and let management know how the program is saving the company money. Monitor and evaluate the program to ensure its viability and success. Track any revenue and avoided costs resulting from the program, such as:

- Recycling revenues.
- Lower garbage bills.
- Reduced purchasing or operating costs.
- Avoided regulatory and compliance expenses.

Step 9: Keep Employees Informed and Involved

Provide regular program updates to employees and management. Employees need to know that their involvement helps to achieve the program's goals. Positive communication and employee recognition are critical components to the long-term success of the program. Here are some suggestions to keep employees informed and involved:

- Write an article about the program's successes and staff involvement for the company newsletter.
- Send e-mail updates on a regular basis.
- Post flyers reminding employees of program goals.
- Encourage each department to designate a "team leader" to monitor efforts.
- Train new employees during the orientation process.
- Give awards to employees or departments who have demonstrated innovative strategies for waste reduction and recycling.

Step 10: Get Recognition

Be proud of your program and publicize your efforts. When you make the commitment to reducing, reusing, recycling and purchasing environmentally preferred products, you're helping to improve the environment and your community. Your customers and members of your community will appreciate your efforts. Let your program set an example for others to follow. Here are some ways to publicize your efforts:

- Send news releases about your program's accomplishments to community papers as well as environmental and business trade publications.
- Post signs and banners in public areas that inform visitors about your program.
- Motivate other businesses to establish their own programs. Speak at business meetings, workshops & seminars.
- Sponsor a local clean-up day or take part in community recycling activities & events. Let the community know your business cares.
- Train new employees during the orientation process.
- Apply to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for a Governor's Award for Excellence in Pollution Prevention.
- Apply for the Minnesota Waste Wise Leader Award.

Summary

When your business or organization reduces waste, you help our environment by preventing pollution and conserving natural resources. You also help your organization by reducing solid-waste associated costs through decreased solid waste fees, decreased hauling fees, revenue earned on recyclables, and more streamlined internal processes at your company.

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