

# Directions for Initiating a Recycling Program

The following is a step-by-step guide to help you design a program specifically for your business. By implementing a program, you can save money and natural resources, and impact your bottom line. You can start by recycling just a few items and slowly increase the amount of material that you recycle. If you already have a program in place, this section may help you determine ways to expand your existing program. Remember, if you need further assistance with your business recycling program, please call 882-3616.



## Step 1 Winning Organizational Support

### Management Support

Employee participation in a recycling program is greater when there is enthusiastic support by management. In order to obtain management's support, be sure to explain the environmental benefits, which include saving energy and resources, as well as reducing air pollution and the amount of waste that is sent to a landfill. Also, explain the economic benefits, including the potential for savings on waste prevention and disposal costs.

## Step 2 Choosing Your Recycling Coordinator

### Select an employee to coordinate waste reduction, reuse, and recycling activities.

Consider someone who is interested in environmental matters and has some knowledge about waste reduction and recycling. The coordinator should be someone who is enthusiastic, communicates well with co-workers, and who can dedicate enough time in the immediate future to establish an effective program.

### The Recycling Coordinator's primary responsibilities will include:

- Looking for opportunities to prevent waste by purchasing reusable, durable, and repairable equipment and supplies.
- Working with suppliers to reduce packaging.
- Reusing items and altering other waste-generating activities wherever possible.
- Targeting materials for mulching and recycling, and selecting and working with your solid waste service provider and the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division to arrange pickup schedules and review other program specifics.
- Setting up a collection bin system in common work areas.
- Locating storage areas and developing a system for moving materials to storage areas.
- Networking with other businesses and local government staff; attending training sessions and seminars on waste management, if possible; and subscribing to waste management publications.
- Promoting waste reduction awareness in the workplace.
- Monitoring, evaluating, and changing the system as needed.

### A large business can form a recycling committee.

Consider forming a committee with representatives from key departments, such as purchasing, receiving, and maintenance, to discuss how to best implement waste reduction at your workplace. Include fellow employees in the development of the program, including department heads and support staff. The broader the base of support and enthusiasm, the greater your chances of cooperation and success.



# Step 3

## Estimating Your Waste Reduction Potential

Opportunities for waste prevention are often hidden in inefficient processes. Looking for ways to operate more efficiently is good business.

To develop an effective program, conduct a waste evaluation to estimate your waste reduction potential and understand existing waste management practices. A waste evaluation identifies the materials generated and their path through your facility from point of purchase to ultimate disposal. This can be a simple visual survey of your trash, or you can sort, weigh, and measure the volume of all the materials in your garbage to obtain more detailed information regarding the make-up of your company's waste stream. Contact the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division at 882-3616 to schedule a free waste audit.

### 1. Where does the waste come from and what is recoverable?

Walk through your facility and note: 1) *What type of work is done in each area?* 2) *What activities produce waste?* 3) *What type of waste is produced?* 4) *What waste can be prevented, reused, or recycled?*

Look in the containers where waste is stored to determine the type of waste being generated by your business. Different businesses will generate different types of preventable, reusable, or recyclable materials. For example, an administrative office may generate white office paper, while a retail outlet may generate large amounts of corrugated cardboard. It is also necessary to evaluate where recyclable containers could be placed, their size, and the frequency of service you will require.

### 2. What materials are commonly purchased and discarded?

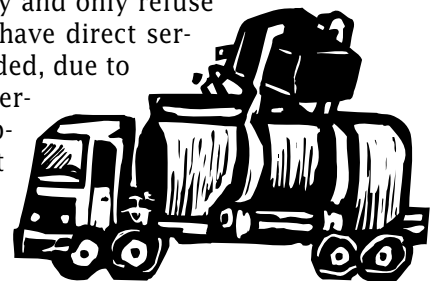
Ask purchasing and maintenance staff about current purchasing and disposal practices to get a better idea of the flow of materials through your facility and the types of waste being generated. Keep in mind "What if?" What if this material could be reused? What if this material could be packaged differently? What if the activity could be altered to prevent waste?

If applicable, interview your landscaper/groundskeeper or other responsible staff about green waste (grass clippings, leaves, etc.) and potential opportunities for reduction through composting, mulching or grasscycling. Grasscycling is the natural recycling of grass by leaving the clippings on the lawn when mowing.

### 3. Understand your waste hauling system.

It is important to know who your solid waste service provider is and to understand your existing waste hauling system.

**Direct service** means that the hauler deals with your account individually and only refuse from your business is going into the dumpster. Large businesses tend to have direct service; therefore, cost savings can be realized when recycling services are added, due to decreased disposal costs. **Shared service** is usually provided by the property manager for a group of businesses. If this is the case, contact your property manager and inquire about recycling. Shared service provides a great opportunity to develop a cost-effective recycling program by combining materials with other commercial establishments on the property.



### 4. Are there recycling programs at neighboring businesses?

What wastes are being reduced, reused, and recycled? If neighboring businesses have recycling programs, inquire about the logistics and details of these programs. Often, simple and practical systems can be duplicated. There is no reason to re-invent the wheel. Determine the types of waste that other businesses have eliminated or reduced, the types of materials that are reused or recycled, how the wastes are collected and transported, and the costs associated with the program. Which materials are reused or recycled, how are they collected and transported, and what costs are associated with the program? Find out if it is possible to consolidate your efforts with other businesses, making recycling more cost-effective. Also, learn the number of people employed at your workplace and whether or not you plan to coordinate with neighboring businesses so your solid waste service provider and the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division can better estimate your potential for recycling.

## 5. Organize your information

Once you have completed your waste evaluation with the help of the Business Recycling Coordinator (882-3616), you will have a good idea of the types and quantities of recyclable materials your company produces and opportunities for waste prevention. You will then be ready to plan your program and to contact your solid waste service provider to initiate service.

# Step 4

## Contact the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division or your Solid Waste Service Provider



Contact your existing solid waste service provider or the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division to arrange for delivery of recycling bins or carts (see contact list on inside back cover). Recycling will undoubtedly be a major component of your waste management program and will require coordination with your solid waste service provider. Recycling is more cost-effective when integrated with existing waste removal operations. If your company pays for waste disposal based upon the frequency of service or the amount of waste generated rather than a flat fee, waste prevention and recycling may be financially rewarding. Often, businesses can reduce disposal costs.

# Step 5

## Setting Up Your Program

### Analyze the costs and benefits of waste prevention activities.

Analyze the purchase costs, labor costs, utility costs, and disposal costs of waste prevention activities such as purchasing longer-lived, durable, or repairable supplies and equipment. While it may cost more up front, you will probably find there are significant cost savings in the long term.



### Choose appropriate recycling containers.

The size and style of recycling equipment varies. Ask your solid waste service provider or the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division for the size receptacles that are suitable for your situation. In many cases, the County will provide containers free of charge. You may wish to purchase your own personalized recycling bins with your company's logo or convert existing trash containers into recycling containers. Many recycling containers are made of recycled materials; therefore, purchase and use them whenever possible.

### Locate and label workspace recycling bins strategically.

To encourage participation among employees and to avoid contaminating recyclables, it helps to place recycling bins in all heavy traffic areas, common work areas, and most importantly, in locations where the recyclables are typically generated. Recycling bins near copy machines and desktop containers for office paper, as well as larger, leak-resistant, recycling bins for bottles and cans in cafeteria areas, are typical examples. It is important to clearly label recycling containers in order to prevent employees and visitors from using them as trash bins. Make sure there are plenty of trash and recycling containers.

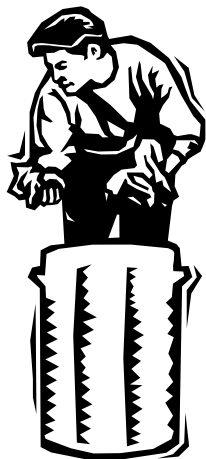


### Storage areas.

Your solid waste service provider and the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division will assist you in setting up the main storage area so that both trash and recycling dumpsters are accessible for pick-up crews and any heavy equipment that may be needed for unloading and loading operations.



**Use in-house staff to consolidate the recyclables from the recycling containers to one main storage area. There are several reasons to use in-house staff to consolidate the recyclables:**



- Recycling bins in the workplace will not overflow.
- Recycling programs are generally more cost-effective when integrated with existing waste disposal and removal systems. Often, existing maintenance operations can be adjusted to include recycling with no significant increase in workload. Many companies will use an alternating collection system in which assigned staff collect recyclables one day and refuse the next. Also, for office settings, consider whether your recyclables would be better consolidated by an evening clean-up crew as opposed to regular daytime personnel.
- When introducing waste-handling personnel into the new program, explain that they are handling both types of materials, but will empty recyclables and trash into different containers.
- If existing waste removal personnel are not involved with the recycling program, be sure new personnel are made aware of your new program in order to avoid mixing and contaminating materials.

### **Set up a reuse area.**

If you have available space, set up a reuse area, where reusable items can be stored rather than thrown away. Encourage employees to reuse these items in the workplace or at home. Make reusable items available to customers, or donate them to a school or charitable organization.

### **Establish a composting or grasscycling program.**

Grass clippings and other plant prunings make up a surprisingly large portion of California's waste stream during the growing season. If your business produces green waste, such as plant or lawn clippings, consider composting the materials on site or use the materials as mulch for landscape plants. Or start grasscycling, that is, leave your grass clippings on the lawn when mowing.

### **Coordinate with neighboring businesses to collect greater amounts of materials and form purchasing coalitions.**

In many businesses, especially those in malls or groups of stores on the same property, waste management is provided by the lessor, and refuse charges are incorporated into the rent. As you know from Step 3, this type of service is referred to as shared service and can lead to cost-effective recycling programs, since neighboring businesses can combine recyclables to collect greater amounts of material.

If feasible, you can also work with neighboring businesses, trade associations, or other members of your industry type to lower the price of recycled products by buying in larger quantities.

## **Step 6**

### **Educating and Motivating Employees**

To prevent waste and collect contaminant-free recyclables, your participating staff must be knowledgeable about program guidelines and the benefits of participating.

#### **Announce your program.**

An announcement issued by the company's owner or senior officer regarding the start of a recycling program is a key element in helping to sell the recycling program to employees so they become dedicated and involved in the effort. Post it conspicuously and encourage your employees to read it. Or better yet, reduce paper waste and announce the program on your electronic mail system! Some companies give their employees coffee mugs or desktop paper recycling containers emblazoned with company and recycling logos.

An environmental policy statement should be included with the announcement, highlighting the benefits of waste reduction (e.g. saving energy and resources and reducing air pollution and the amount of waste that is sent to a landfill) and outlining separation and collection procedures. The policy statement should also explain the economic benefits, including potential for savings on waste prevention and disposal costs. Issuing a company environmental policy statement is one way for management to show commitment to a successful program.



### **Establish a contact for recycling questions and information.**

Some employees might be uncomfortable with the new system. Therefore, it is important to have an outlet for questions and information. The recycling coordinator is most familiar with the details and logistics of the program and is the most appropriate person to handle questions from other employees. The coordinator's name, phone number, and e-mail address should be included in the memo announcing the program.

### **Employee training is essential for a successful program.**

Your coordinator should provide initial training for all staff and refresher sessions as necessary. New employees should receive training when hired. Use posters and other training materials to disseminate information to employees.

### **Encourage feedback and suggestions from employees.**

Incentives such as contests and prizes will help ensure success. Give credit and recognition to employees for their efforts.

### **Follow-up publicity.**

It is important to continually publicize the success of your waste reduction efforts and address any shortcomings. Success encourages continued participation. Information about quantities of waste prevented and disposal cost savings should be shared with staff. Problems such as material contamination or low participation rates should also be shared. Reminders like these will help maintain a successful program.



## **Step 7**

### **Purchasing with Waste Prevention in Mind**

Waste prevention, also known as source reduction, is any action undertaken to eliminate or reduce the amount or toxicity of materials before they enter the municipal solid waste stream. This approach ultimately conserves resources, promotes efficiency, and reduces pollution.

- If your business purchases and uses products that are reusable, durable, and repairable, you will be cutting down on the amount of waste that is produced and landfilled. These products will last longer and save you money in the long run. Urge your suppliers to provide you with these items.
- Remember to also request supplies and materials that are recyclable. If you manufacture a product, keep the recyclability of that product in mind.
- Money saved through avoided disposal costs can be donated to a charity selected by employees, or applied toward employee holiday parties, labor-saving equipment for employees, or the purchase of additional waste reduction equipment.
- Buy products with recycled content. Check out the Directory of Recycled Content Products section of this guide (pages 69-74) for information on local stores that may carry recycled content products.
- The collection of recyclable materials is one step of the three-step process we call recycling. The reprocessing of these materials into new products and the purchase of these new products by consumers and businesses are the essential last two steps in closing the loop of the recycling process. When you buy goods with recycled content, your purchases help to create a demand for materials collected in recycling programs. Business purchases of recycled content products are extremely important to develop and maintain markets for the increasing quantity of materials that will be diverted from landfills.
- Reduce packaging waste. Did you know that packaging makes up approximately one third of all solid waste in California? Coalitions of government, public interest and industry groups across the nation are recommending that reduced packaging guidelines be followed to cut down on packaging waste. Basically, they are suggesting that packaging be eliminated whenever possible; be minimized, refilled or reused; be recyclable; and be made from recycled materials.
- Tell your suppliers that you are interested in buying products that contain less packaging whenever feasible. Ask them to take back shipping boxes to reuse or recycle. Make reduced packaging available to your customers too.

