

## Waste Reduction Tips For Businesses

Waste reduction is first in the hierarchy of waste management and focuses on the prevention of solid waste generation through changes in products, packaging and purchasing. Waste reduction is the design, manufacture, purchase or use of materials to reduce the volume or toxicity before they enter the waste stream. (Also known as source reduction.)

### Why do it?

Have you ever looked at your dumpster and thought about money going into the landfill? Well, you should! Most of the waste in Fort Collins comes from the commercial sector and each business is paying those disposal costs. Just think about the money you can save by avoiding disposal costs — waste reduction (or prevention) is the key to success! Moreover, by examining internal processes, some companies have found ways to not only reduce or prevent waste, but also to change processes that improve their bottom line. Visit Sustainable Business Institute's web site at <http://www.sustainablebusiness.org/> for information on affecting environmental change in your company.

**General Tips** - These apply to most business types, especially offices and retail.

### Purchasing

- Establish purchasing guidelines to encourage waste prevention (durable, concentrated, reusable, 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. (Contract for maintenance to extend the life of products).
- 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 layers of packaging. Contact manufacturers directly and express purchase preferences. 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 paper recycling mills. Pastel colors (light green, light blue, canary yellow, light pink) are less of a problem and stand out just as well.
- Request that deliveries be shipped in returnable containers.
- Order supplies by voice mail or electronic mail, whenever possible.
- Use optical scanners, which give more details about inventory, allowing more precise ordering.
- Start your own Recycled-Content Purchasing Program, visit The Buy Recycled Business Alliance web site at: <http://www.nrc-recycle.org/brba/>

### Packaging

- Eliminate unneeded packaging or layers of packaging.
- Use lightweight packaging to conserve materials. See Hewlett Packard's site on Packaging Guidelines at: <http://packaging.hp.com/enviro/environment.htm>
- 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 customers to return boxes for reuse. You will save by not having to buy as many new boxes.
- Encourage suppliers to use reusable totes or boxes, rather than sending you disposable boxes that you have to break down and recycle.
- Print a message on products to encourage consumers to recycle or reuse the packaging.
- Reuse packing materials (e.g., foam peanuts, bubblewrap and cardboard boxes) or find someone who can.
- Use materials already on hand for 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 foam 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 copies whenever possible. Visit "Cutting Paper Use" at <http://eetd.lbl.gov/paper/>
- Reuse envelopes and use two-way envelopes.
- Circulate memos, periodicals and reports, rather than distributing individual copies.
- Use voice or electronic mail or post memos on a central bulletin board.
- Make scratch pads from used paper.
- Use outdated letterhead for in-house memos.
- Eliminate unnecessary forms. Double-side forms or redesign them to fit on a half sheet.
- Use narrow-ruled notebooks.
- Save documents on floppy disks instead of printing hard copies.
- Use central files for hard copies.
- Print more words on each page (e.g., smaller font, and narrow margins).
- 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 same draft of 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.
- Provide convenient/accessible recycling stations for employees.

### Overstocked/Surplus Items

- Set up an area for employees to exchange used items.

### Equipment

- Consider renting instead of buying equipment that is used only occasionally.
- Use quality used or remanufactured office equipment
- Invest in equipment that facilitates waste prevention such as: high quality, durable, repairable equipment; copiers and printers that make two-sided copies; modem cards; folder/sealers.
- 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 like pens, etc.
- Sell or give old furniture and equipment to employees or donate it to a local charity.
- Use retreaded tires 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.
- Replace incandescent with energy efficient fluorescent lights.
- "Delamp" light fixtures when workspace is over lit (i.e., in 4 lamp fixtures, take out 2 of the lamps) and use the lowest watt bulbs necessary to light your home and office.
- Use rechargeable batteries where practical.
- Use hand blowers or cloth towel dispensers in bathrooms, or purchase recycled and unbleached paper towel rolls.

## Communications

- Get off unwanted mailing lists! Use the National Waste Prevention Coalition's website at <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/nwpc/bizjunkmail.htm> to get your name off national mailing lists and save your business money.
- Use recycled-content items related to intra and inter-office communications: cork boards, paper, pencils, pens, etc.
- Confused about what recycled-content and other recycling lingo means? Go to: "The Language of Recycling" at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/alerts/ecoalrt.htm>.
- 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 e-mail 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 you are sending.
- Reuse old envelopes for internal mailings.
- Keep mailing lists current to avoid duplication or mailing to invalid addresses.
- Don't prestuff packets for meetings or conferences. Let participants take the handouts they think they will use.
- Use e-mail and voice mail for interoffice messages.
- Route magazines and other subscriptions rather than ordering copies for individual employees.
- Donate old magazines or journals to hospitals, clinics, or libraries.
- Keep mailing lists current/one copy per address.
- Call or mail postcards directly to senders asking that your name be removed from mailing lists.

## "Outside" your Business

### Landscaping

- Compost organic waste and use in landscaping operations. Compost is a natural nutrient-rich substitute for fertilizers!
- Incorporate waste reduction into the planning process for special projects such as: minimizing discards from construction and demolition; reusing materials; providing extra containers for recycling, etc.
- Utilize organic gardening techniques to avoid the use of pesticides whenever possible.
- Utilize reusable packages that are designed to be returned to the manufacturer or distributor to be refilled.
- Reuse plant containers & flats or return them to a local nursery for reuse.
- Use plants that require less pruning and use native plants whenever possible.
- Choose plants that fit into the space available to avoid trimming.
- Choose slow-growing/drought resistant/native species and evergreens, when updating or developing a landscape design in order to reduce the production of plant debris and minimize water and fertilizer use.
- Using both winter and summer perennials can give year-round color without the cost and waste of replacing annual plants.

- Design landscape based on anticipated use (turf vs. shrubbery).
- Choose dwarf or other slow growing varieties of turf that require less water.
- Incorporate "Grasscycling" into your lawn care. Leaving grass clippings on a lawn can significantly reduce the waste volume while conserving soil nutrients and saving fertilizer costs. Use a mulching mower to cut grass into smaller pieces, thereby allowing the clippings to decompose faster. Regular mowers can be retrofit with mulching blades to further cut new equipment costs.
- Composting leaves and branches along with grass trimmings and other organic matter will create a high-nutrient soil additive used for landscaping.
- Use compost as a topsoil amendment or request that your landscaper use it.
- Chipping wood and other ground debris will provide mulch used for weed reduction and moisture conservation around interior plants or landscaped trees and shrubs.
- Locate an off-site composting site to reduce the costs of on-site management or disposal of yard waste.

### Food and Personal Services

- Purchase less toxic cleaners. See Green Seal's "Choose Green report" at: <http://www.greenseal.org/publications.htm>
- Dispense cleaning solutions in refillable containers like pump spray bottles. Use products in non-aerosol containers where possible.
- Use durable towels, tablecloths, napkins, dishes, flatware, cups and glasses.
- Encourage employees to bring their own mugs and utensils. Ask food vendors to offer discounts on beverages served in a customer's own mug.
- Buy company mugs; stop providing disposable cups.
- Buy reusable coffee filters or unbleached disposable filters.
- Reuse trash can liners or eliminate where possible and discontinue use in cans with dry trash only.
- Consider using cloth roll towels, hot air dryers, large paper rolls in restrooms, or buy lighter/smaller-sized paper towels.

### Consumer Choices

- 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 paper); banners; newspaper ads; product displays and store signs.
- Encourage customers to bring their own bag(s) and compliment them when they do.
- Offer customers a rebate when they reuse grocery bags, containers, mugs and cups.
- If you serve beverages in cans or bottles, place a recycling bin in the dining area for your customers' empty beverage containers.
- Go to: Smart Office for more information on recycling, buying recycled and more! At: <http://www.smartoffice.com/>.

