

DEVELOPING A RECYCLING PROGRAM FOR COMMERCIAL, INSTITUTIONAL & MUNICIPAL ESTABLISHMENTS

RECYCLING REQUIRED BY LAW

Act 101 of 1988 requires commercial, institutional and municipal establishments located in Pennsylvania's mandated municipalities* to recycle high-grade office paper, corrugated paper, aluminum and leaf waste. In addition, establishments must recycle any other materials included in the municipality's recycling ordinance or regulations, which may include glass, newsprint, plastics, and/or steel and bimetallic cans.

DESIGNING A PROGRAM

A well designed recycling program complies with the law, reduces waste, and saves natural resources. Source reduction combined with recycling can further reduce waste. Elements of a successful recycling program are as follows:

1. TOP-LEVEL MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

The success of your recycling program hinges upon the endorsement of senior management. Their positive support promotes a similar attitude among the establishment's employees and customers. Also, recycling programs often require initial outlays of capital. Management approval of a recycling budget ensures that resources are available when needed.

2. RECYCLING COORDINATOR

A coordinator should be appointed to manage the entire recycling program. The person selected should be genuinely interested in recycling and able to interface with personnel at all organization levels. It is advisable to incorporate recycling responsibilities into the employee's overall job description.

3. RECYCLING TASK FORCE

A task force should be formed to help the coordinator initiate the program. It may become a permanent advisory body to ensure continued program development. For best results, choose task force representatives from the departments that will be most affected by your recycling program, such as building human resources. It is also a good idea to include a spokesperson for employees.

4. KNOWLEDGE OF WASTE STREAM

The coordinator should assess the amount of recyclables in your organization's waste stream, and where they originate. This assessment is known as a waste audit. The waste audit should focus on offices, cafeterias, lounges, restrooms, vending machine areas, boiler rooms, maintenance areas, storage areas, and other locations where trash originates. If the audit reveals that yard debris composes a large percentage of the waste stream, the task force should consider the feasibility of including on-site composting as part of the recycling program.

5. WASTE REDUCTION

During the waste audit, identify waste reduction opportunities. Create two-sided memos and letters and keep used paper handy for notes and rough drafts. Use electronic mail for internal correspondence. Explore the feasibility of using durable products in place of disposable ones.

6. MARKETS FOR RECYCLABLES

Your recycling program will generate materials that can be used by producers of recycled products, known as end-users. It is the job of the recycling coordinator to decide how to get recyclables to the market place. Recyclables may be marketed directly to an end-user if agreement can be reached on the amount, quality and regularity of the shipments. Otherwise, it will be necessary to negotiate with intermediaries -- such as waste haulers or recyclers -- to collect and market recyclables. The coordinator should discuss recycling strategies with waste haulers, recyclers and end-users long before adopting a final plan for the recycling program.

7. INTERNAL COLLECTION

Whether your organization is housed in a number of buildings or in one building, it will be necessary to design a method for collecting recyclables. The main thrust in developing an internal collection system should be **CONVENIENCE**. Key considerations are as follows:

- **CONTAINERS.** Recycling container options range from reused corrugated boxes to a wide variety of commercially available bins. Consider where containers are to be placed, the quantity needed, size, shape, color, and identification (e.g., labels, decals or posters) that informs employees and customers what to put in and what to leave out. Check with your local fire marshal regarding fire code compliance.
- **STORAGE.** The central storage area should be clean, dry and free of fire hazards. If located outside, consider using covered storage bins to preserve material quality and prevent litter.
- **COLLECTION PERSONNEL.** Collecting recyclables and taking them to the central storage area is usually the responsibility of custodial staff. If recyclables must be delivered to a market, delivery personnel must be designated. A printed operations schedule is helpful to collection and delivery personnel.

- **MATERIALS PREPARATION.** Many end-users require special preparation of materials for efficient transportation and/or incorporation into their manufacturing processes. Preparation techniques include crushing, bundling and baling.



A paper recycling container is located in each cubicle in DEP headquarters.



Containers for recycling cans and bottles are located near the snack bar.

8. EDUCATION AND PROMOTION

A sustained program is imperative to (1) tell employees and customers about your recycling policies, procedures and goals; (2) encourage participation; (3) stress that recyclables must be kept free of contaminants that can diminish their market value; and (4) publicize program successes to maintain ongoing participation. Usual channels for conveying this information include staff meetings, orientation meetings for new employees, newsletters, fliers and posters.

9. EVALUATION

The coordinator should monitor the program to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency. Sources of information include: (1) maintenance staff, for input regarding improper handling and contamination of materials; (2) accounting staff, regarding waste management costs; (3) employees and customers, for suggestions concerning convenience; (4) safety staff regarding possible storage violations; and (5) waste hauler or recycler, for information on the amount of waste generated and materials recycled, and the percentage of waste reduced through recycling.

10. PROCUREMENT POLICIES

Purchasing products that are made from or packaged in recycled materials create a demand for the materials generated by your recycling program. One way to achieve this is through revising bid specifications, which give a price preference for items containing post-consumer materials.

**Reference Act 101 of 1988. Pennsylvania's "Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act." §1501(c)(1)(iii)*