



# A Guide to Recycling

## for Owners of Apartments & Other Multi-Family Dwellings



Because more than 30 percent of

Wisconsinites live in apartments, owners of apartment buildings and other multi-family dwellings play an important role in promoting recycling around the state.

Property owners are required by law to provide residents with the opportunity to recycle. Providing your staff and residents with an easy-to-follow recycling program will not only preserve natural resources, it may also help you save money on waste disposal costs and promote your business as environmentally responsible.



### Requirements for owners of multi-family dwellings

Wisconsin's recycling law<sup>1</sup> and local ordinances require the owners of all multi-family buildings and facilities to:

- Provide separate containers for the collection and recycling of materials banned from landfills and incinerators.
- Notify residents in writing about the recycling program at the time of renting or purchasing and at least twice a year thereafter.
- Arrange for the collection and transportation of recyclables to a recycling or processing facility.
- Educate residents about the three R's (reduce, reuse, and recycle) and other waste reduction strategies.
- Obey local recycling ordinance requirements.

### What must be recycled in Wisconsin?

#### In your building or facility:

- Aluminum, glass, steel (tin) and bi-metal containers
- Plastic containers #1 and #2, including milk jugs and detergent, soda and water bottles
- Magazines, catalogs and other materials printed on similar paper
- Newspaper and office paper
- Corrugated cardboard

#### At other locations in your community:

- Computers, televisions, desktop printers, computer peripherals, DVD players, VCRs, digital video recorders, fax machines, and phones with video displays
- Lead acid vehicle batteries, automotive waste oils, and waste tires
- Oil absorbents over one gallon and used oil filters
- Major appliances including air conditioners, microwaves, dehumidifiers, clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, refrigerators, stoves, ovens, furnaces, boilers, and water heaters
- Yard trimmings, including grass clippings, leaves, and yard and garden debris

For a current list of materials banned from landfill and incinerator disposal, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "What to recycle."

### Why recycle?

**To save resources** Recycling saves valuable natural resources and reduces the energy use and pollution associated with extracting and manufacturing virgin materials.

**To reduce costs** Like other Wisconsin businesses, apartment owners pay for waste disposal. By offering recycling to your tenants, you may be able to switch to a smaller dumpster or reduce the number of times your dumpster needs to be emptied. And in many cases, recycling services cost significantly less than waste disposal.

**To improve customer service** Offering recycling will meet tenants' expectations of environmental responsibility. A recent survey indicates that more than 95% of Wisconsin citizens recycle regularly. Making recycling available to tenants also makes your properties more attractive.

**To obey the law** Under Wisconsin law, landlords are required to provide recycling services on their properties.

<sup>1</sup> Under s. 287.07, Wis. Stats. For more information visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "recycling law."

## 1. Understand your recycling system

Before starting a new recycling program or improving an existing one, you will need to **understand the basic framework of recycling at your property**. Use the answers to these questions as a guide for designing your recycling program:



- Who will be recycling?
- Where in your facility would people be recycling? Where can residents collect and store recyclables? What are your building logistics?

## Determine key players and their roles

### ■ Building manager

Your building manager can be one of your most effective partners in creating and maintaining a successful recycling program. Since the manager may interact frequently with residents, he or she can continually educate residents on the recycling program and answer their questions.

### ■ Maintenance staff

Maintenance staff may be responsible for maintaining the recycling area, moving collection containers to an accessible location for haulers, checking for contamination (items that cannot be recycled or are dirty), and assisting with educational and enforcement efforts. Education and training about your recycling program are just as important for staff as they are for residents.

### ■ Residents

With education and support, residents are the most important part of your recycling program. Be sure they are aware of the program basics (the who, what, when, where and how) as well as the specifics of what they need to do. When designing your program, also remember that residents will recycle the most when it is convenient and easy for them.

### ■ Local recycling centers

Recycling facilities or drop-off sites in your community likely accept recyclables your hauler or community program doesn't—this will be an important detail to communicate to residents who have items they need to recycle but can't through their building's program.

Talk to your community's recycling coordinator to find out what is accepted at your local recycling center. Be sure to find out where materials like electronics, appliances, yard waste, motor oil, car batteries and tires can be recycled in your area.

- What are your recycling options? What is being recycled now, and what recyclables are being thrown away?
- When and how often are recyclables collected?

*TIP: Walk yourself through the process of recycling at your facility and consider how to make each step convenient and efficient.*

## 2. Choose a service

**Private hauler** Call your waste hauler to discuss the recycling services they offer. If your current hauler doesn't offer recycling service, you will then need to either choose another hauler, find out if your local recycling program will provide recycling services to your property, or take recyclables to a drop-off recycling center.



Be sure to ask the following questions when you are discussing recycling services with a potential hauler:

- What materials do you accept?
- How should materials be prepared and/or sorted?
- Do you collect recyclables curbside or from access to the dumpster?
- What kind of containers do you provide? If you do not provide them, where can they be purchased?
- How often do you collect recyclables and on what day(s)? Note if this day is different from your trash collection
- Where will recyclables be taken? **Note:** *If a hauler says that you or your residents do not need to separate out recyclables from waste and that the hauler will do this later at a waste facility, **this is not correct**. Please contact your DNR regional recycling specialist if you hear this from a hauler.*
- If you have questions about the recycling service or advice a hauler is giving you, contact your DNR regional recycling specialist. To find your DNR regional recycling specialist, go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "recycling staff contacts."

**Find out which collection method your hauler uses.** If you prefer a different collection method, call other haulers available in your area to see what they offer—you can use separate haulers for waste and recycling services. The three most common methods are:

- Single stream: All recyclables are put into one designated container.
- Dual stream: Residents sort recyclables into two containers: one for newspaper, magazines and cardboard, and a second for co-mingled glass bottles and jars, steel and aluminum cans, and plastic containers.
- Source separation: Residents sort recyclables by material into appropriate carts or bins.

**Local recycling program** Local programs are required to have a system in place to collect recyclables from single- to four-unit residences, but some may offer the same recycling service for buildings or facilities with five or more units. If you choose not to contract with a private hauler, contact your local recycling program to see if they will pick up recyclables from your property.

**Drop-off** You may decide not to have your recyclables collected and instead have your staff transport them to a recycling drop-off center. In this case, you will need to purchase bins or carts where residents will bring and sort their recyclables.

### 3. Set up your system

Once you have set up your recycling service, you'll need to **choose a place for residents to bring their recyclables.**

■ **Outside drop-off:** Residents bring recyclables directly to outside containers.

■ **Inside drop-off:** Residents bring recyclables to an inside storage area, and maintenance staff transfer the material outside. Check fire codes before selecting a location, and be sure to provide containers for residents to sort recyclables if necessary for your collection method.



**Follow these guidelines to set up recycling throughout your facility:**

- Place a recycling bin next to every trash can in the common areas of your facility. For example, think of lobbies, hallways, elevator bays, mail room, laundry rooms, etc.
- Choose recycling containers that are a different color than garbage cans or dumpsters.
- Label trash and recycling bins indicating what recyclables (or trash) are acceptable.
- Place labels on the top and sides of bins, so if one label is blocked, the other can be seen.
- Make recycling and garbage containers easily accessible to all residents.
- Post a copy of the most recent educational materials given to residents in the recycling and common areas of your building.
- Find out how residents should recycle electronics, appliances, yard waste, lead-acid batteries, used motor oil and tires. Call your local recycling program or your DNR regional recycling specialist for local recycling options for these materials.

### 4. Educate, Educate, Educate

The single most important factor in the success of your recycling program is resident awareness. Staff and residents must know about the program and how it works in order to participate and participate effectively. **Wisconsin law requires landlords to educate residents on their building's recycling programs at move-in and twice per year thereafter.**



**When you provide information to residents, be sure to let them know the basics of your recycling program:**

- What materials to recycle
- How to prepare and sort materials
- Where to bring recyclables
- Why they're recycling
- When and how often recyclables are collected
- Who to contact for more information

**Use any of the following methods to educate and keep residents informed:**

- Lease addenda
- Move-in packets
- Recycling guide
- Letters to residents
- Website
- Fliers
- Door-hangers
- Newsletters

Be sure to include in your recycling materials **instructions for residents on where to take items that must be recycled but aren't collected in your facility.** This includes electronics, appliances, lead-acid batteries, used motor oil and oil filters, tires and yard waste.

Don't forget to consider the demographics of your properties. If you have residents who don't speak English, **consider translating basic recycling information into other languages.** The DNR offers several recycling publications in Spanish and Hmong.

The DNR and its recycling program partners have many resources available to help educate your residents. To find recycling publications, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "**recycling education and outreach.**" Your community's local recycling program may also be able to provide you with educational materials.

## 5. Maintain your recycling program

**Evaluate your program.** Once your recycling program is up and running, evaluate its effectiveness and make adjustments as needed. Get feedback on your program in the following ways:

- Talk with residents about the convenience of the program
- Ask staff to identify areas for improvement
- Ask your hauler questions about the quantity and quality of materials being collected

Make sure recycling and trash containers have enough capacity to hold the materials that accumulate between collections. Ask your hauler for additional container capacity or more frequent service if overflow is an issue.

**Deal with contamination** Contamination occurs when recyclables are not properly cleaned or sorted or when garbage ends up in the recycling bin. To help manage and prevent this, periodically check your recycling containers for contamination. If you notice consistent issues with contamination, you may need to provide your residents with a reminder on how to prepare their recyclables.



### DNR has recycling signs that are free for you to use.

Visit the DNR website at <http://dnr.wi.gov> and search “recycling signage” to download any of the signs.



### Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Bureau of Waste and Materials Management  
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Madison, WI 53707-7921

For more information or to order publications, please contact [DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov) or 608-266-2111.

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## Resources

For additional information on recycling in Wisconsin, contact the DNR Waste and Materials Management Program at [DNRWasteMaterials@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRWasteMaterials@wisconsin.gov) or 608-266-2111. You can also call the DNR recycling specialist in your region.

To find your DNR regional recycling specialist, go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search “recycling staff contacts.”

- **Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin** A nonprofit association of business, government, nonprofits and trade associations. See [www.arow-online.org](http://www.arow-online.org). Contact AROW at [admin@arow-online.org](mailto:admin@arow-online.org) or (608) 843-7360.
- **UW-Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center** Provides information and technical assistance to businesses on waste reduction, recycling, and pollution prevention. See [www.uwex.edu/shwec/](http://www.uwex.edu/shwec/). Contact SHWEC at [shwec-help@uwm.edu](mailto:shwec-help@uwm.edu)
- **WasteCap Resource Solutions, Inc.** A nonprofit dedicated to providing waste reduction and recycling assistance for the benefit of business and the environment. See [www.wastecap.org](http://www.wastecap.org). Contact WasteCap at [wastecap@wastecap.org](mailto:wastecap@wastecap.org) or (414) 961-1100 or (608) 245-1100.
- **Wisconsin Business Recycling Toolkit** A toolkit for commercial, business, institutions and other away from home recycling. See [www.shwec.uwm.edu/recyclingtoolkit/](http://www.shwec.uwm.edu/recyclingtoolkit/).
- **Wisconsin Recycling Markets Directory** A detailed directory of recyclers, haulers and contractors throughout the state. Enter the item you would like to recycle to see a list of recyclers in your area. See [www.wisconsinrecyclingdirectory.com](http://www.wisconsinrecyclingdirectory.com).