



Recycling and Waste Reduction a Guide for the Workplace



For many Wisconsin workplaces, recycling has become part of good business. Recycling saves money, preserves valuable resources and can help promote your business as environmentally friendly. With a few simple changes your business can be on the path toward reducing what you throw away and increasing what you recycle.



Why Recycle and Reduce Waste?

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

To reduce costs: Like other businesses, workplaces pay for waste disposal. In many cases, recycling services cost significantly less than trash disposal; companies that reuse or recycle more waste can save significant costs on waste disposal. Reusing more materials can also reduce purchasing and handling costs.

To improve customer service: Recycling demonstrates your business' commitment to environmental protection. A recent survey indicates that over 95% of Wisconsin citizens recycle regularly. People now expect to find recycling containers wherever they travel. Offering recycling is just another way to better serve your customers.

What Should Be Recycled in Wisconsin?

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

Designing Your Recycling and Waste Reduction Program

1. Get management support

A workplace recycling program does more than help the environment and save money. Done right, a recycling program boosts morale and facilitates team building. Top-level support will help stimulate employee involvement in the program and ensure that you get the needed time, materials and equipment to make the program work.



2. Form a "Green Team"

Approaching recycling as a team can help ensure the success of your program. A green team is a group of employees interested in recycling and helping to set up a program. Small businesses can accomplish this with a dedicated individual, while larger businesses will need a small team with members from management, operations, purchasing, sales, maintenance, etc.



3. Understand your waste

Recycling helps the environment by recovering valuable resources and turning them into new products we use every day. Before you start your recycling program, conduct an audit of your company's waste. Look through all trash bins for several weeks. List the types and weights of items customers and staff throw away. Look for materials that are:



- Present in significant quantities.
- Relatively free of contamination (food, glue, etc.).
- Easily separated from other materials.

Commonly recycled materials in an office setting include:

- Office and other mixed paper
- Magazines and catalogs
- Newspaper
- Cardboard
- Aluminum cans
- Plastic bottles
- Toner and ink cartridges
- Computers and other electronics
- Fluorescent lightbulbs

Commonly recycled materials in retail, warehouse, automotive and manufacturing areas include:

- Cardboard used in shipping and packaging
- Used motor oil, oil filters and oil absorbents
- Tires
- Lead acid batteries
- Scrap metal, plastic and other materials
- Large appliances

4. Find a market for what you plan to collect

Once you've identified which materials you want to recycle, you'll need to find a market or hauler that will take your items for processing. Your property manager or current waste hauler may be able to play this role. Your municipal or county recycling office can also help you in finding a market or recycler.



5. Set up your collection system

Develop a recycling plan that will make recycling easy for your fellow employees. Because a large part of your program's recycling success will likely depend on janitors, make sure you involve them in the planning process. Consider:



- How often should containers be emptied and by whom?
- How/where will materials be stored before going to a processor?
- Who will be responsible for making sure the right items end up in the right bin?
- Who will be responsible for training of new janitorial staff?

6. Recycling containers

Choose recycling containers that are easy to recognize (a different color than trash containers) and place them in high traffic areas and close to where recyclables are generated: near printers and copiers, in your mail room, at employee desks and in break and lunch rooms. Wherever possible, place recycling containers next to trash containers. This will help ensure separation of your recyclables.



Managing wastes cooperatively

Small businesses may want to join together and cooperatively negotiate a contract for trash and recycling services. As a group, you can benefit from discounts for more materials collected and save money by sharing expenses on collection fees, storage bins, compactors, balers, transportation and labor.



Wisconsin Business Recycling Toolkit www.shwec.uwm.edu/recyclingtoolkit/

Wisconsin's recycling requirements apply to everyone in the state at all locations. Wisconsinites already recycle a lot at home, but do not recycle as much "away from home." The online Business Recycling Toolkit can help your business recycle more by connecting you with recyclers and recycling markets.

7. Educate and motivate employees

Your employees will be a large factor in ensuring your program's success. Get them involved, informed, and on board with a kick-off program (meeting, potluck, etc.) that emphasizes the benefits of recycling and the basics of your program. To keep employees informed and engaged:



- **Post signs on or near collection containers that clearly indicate what materials are accepted (illustrations or photos help).**
- **Develop fact sheets or informational posters and post them on your company's intranet, in break rooms or other common areas.**
- **Identify employees who are excited about recycling and enlist them as recycling champions to sell the program to other employees.**
- **Create competitions rewards and other incentives to make recycling fun.**

8. Evaluate your program

After your program has had time to get established, evaluate your success and make adjustments. Work with your custodial staff, recycling champions and hauler to identify problems or opportunities for improvement. Ask your hauler for information on:



- **How much of each material is being collected.**
- **Quality of materials collected and any contamination issues.**
- **Costs/savings associated with your recycling program.**

9. Continue education efforts

Frequent reminders of the purpose and function of your recycling program will keep employees engaged recyclers:



- **Post updates and reminders about your program on your company's e-mail list, intranet or newsletter.**
- **Recognize employees or groups of employees for their efforts in recycling.**
- **Let employees know how much waste they're diverting—post annual results for them to see.**
- **Continue to discuss recycling periodically at staff and other meetings.**

10. Expand your program

Remember there are hundreds of materials your office or workplace can recycle. After you've established a successful program for recycling the basics, you may want to expand out to other materials like compostable food waste, tyvek envelopes, cell phones and other electronics, or other materials.



Reduce your waste

Recycling preserves valuable resources by reducing the need for new, virgin materials. But before you even get to the recycling stage, your business can help save money and resources by reducing the amount of waste you produce.



In the office

Go virtual to save paper

- Use electronic files with appropriate disks for back-up. Maintain an electronic filing system.
- Share, review and edit documents on-screen.
- Print emails, memos and other documents only when necessary. Make two-sided (duplex) copies.
- Remove your business' name from junk mail lists by calling the 800 numbers on catalogs, or registering with the Direct Marketing Association at DMAchoice.org.
- Circulate one copy of a memo, letter or publication to several people via a routing slip.
- Maintain a centralized and/or electronic filing system.
- Reuse blank or one-sided paper.

In retail, warehouse, automotive and manufacturing areas

Reduce packaging

- Ask suppliers/shippers not to send you disposable, overly packaged or hard-to-recycle packing materials.
- Avoid single-use containers.
- Deliver your product with the minimal amount of packaging.
- Purchase high quality reusable pallets which last longer and are easily repaired.

Reduce the materials you use

- Improve product design to use fewer materials.
- Practice good housekeeping techniques to reduce spills and leaks.
- Use drip pans to catch spills and buy multiple-use oil spill cleanup materials in place of single-use.
- Evaluate pollution prevention options to reduce your use and waste of toxic and hazardous substances.
- Use high-volume, low pressure and other high efficiency paint transfer spray guns.

Reuse your waste



In the office

Give equipment and supplies a second life

- Repair old furniture and office equipment or donate it to charity.
- Buy furniture from suppliers of used office furniture.
- Donate old magazines to hospitals, libraries or charity.
- Use re-fillable, reusable toner cartridges for laser printers and copiers.
- Convert scrap paper into memo and telephone message pads.

Implement simple business practices

- Use a dry erase board for messages and meetings.
- Use reusable or two-way envelopes and mailing pouches.
- Encourage staff to use reusable cups or mugs for beverages.

In retail, warehouse, automotive and manufacturing areas

Reuse packaging

- Purchase or ask suppliers to provide sturdy, high quality storage and shipping containers made of plastic, wood or metal, which can be reused indefinitely.
- Return corrugated boxes to your supplier for reuse or reuse them yourself.
- Wash out and reuse steel and plastic storage containers that carried non-hazardous materials.
- Repair broken wooden pallets for reuse.
- Create your own packing materials by shredding non-recyclable paper items and reusing packing materials you received.
- Enclose a note in packages asking recipients to reuse packaging materials.

Implement simple business practices

- Properly maintain your equipment to reduce wear and extend its life and efficiency.
- Consider remanufacturing worn down equipment instead of replacing it and promote the use of reconditioned parts.
- Use a waste exchange to find needed merchandise or equipment and to find a home for your surplus materials.
- Replace paper hand towels with reusable cloth towels and cleaning rags.

Your business can make a difference

Many businesses feel the amount of waste they dispose is too small to make a difference. But businesses can have an enormous impact on how much is recycled in Wisconsin. Wisconsin businesses annually generate about 45 percent of the state's municipal waste stream. A large percentage of materials generated by businesses can be reused or recycled. More than 50 percent of the waste generated by retail stores and warehouses is recyclable corrugated cardboard. Office buildings can generate almost three pounds of trash per person per day; 75 percent of this is paper.

Waste reduction and recycling isn't difficult or expensive. In fact, your business can save money by:

- **Reducing your disposal and/or incineration costs.**
- **Reducing the costs of inefficient and wasteful packaging.**
- **Reusing durable shipping containers.**
- **Implementing good purchasing and inventory management practices.**
- **Buying non-toxic cleaning supplies in concentrates.**

It can also:

- **Earn money through selling high-grade recyclable materials for profit.**
- **Create a positive image with customers and your local community by showing you care about the environment.**



Complete the loop by buying recycled

You're well on your way toward reducing, reusing and recycling your company's waste—now what? Purchasing recycled materials can also help promote recycling in your company. Recycled materials use less energy in their manufacturing, and by purchasing recycled, you will support companies that value recycling.



- **Purchase recycled packaging materials, like shredded newspaper and cardboard, when shipping items to customers.**
- **Include recycled materials in manufactured products whenever possible.**
- **Purchase office supplies and paper that use recycled materials.**

Resources

For additional information on recycling in Wisconsin, contact the DNR Waste and Materials Management Program at DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov or 608-266-2111.

Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin — A nonprofit association of business, government, nonprofits and trade associations. See www.arowonline.org. Contact AROW at admin@arowonline.org or (608) 843-7360.

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/. Contact SHWEC at shwec-help@uwm.edu.

WasteCap Resources, Inc. — A nonprofit dedicated to providing waste reduction and recycling assistance for the benefit of business and the environment. See www.wastecap.org. Contact WasteCap at 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/.

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.



“Offering recycling is just another way to better serve your customers.”





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For more information on away from home recycling, or to order publications, contact DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov or (608) 266-2111.

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