

# Commercial Recycling Toolkit

## Convenience Stores



### **Recycling Waste Makes Good Business \$ense**

Yes, recycling can save money! Recycling is often less expensive than trash disposal. Whether you are just starting or are trying to improve an existing program, it always helps to have a plan. Designing an effective recycling program will insure that you comply with the Universal Recycling Law, will help reduce your waste stream, will save natural resources and energy, and has the potential for significant waste disposal savings. This toolkit will provide assistance in setting up a new recycling program or help you evaluate your current program.

Other elements of waste reduction include ways you reduce and reuse the waste you generate. The first and most effective component of the waste hierarchy is to reduce the waste created. Reduce waste by purchasing in bulk, buying items with less packaging and switching to reusable instead of single-use items. These efforts benefit the environment and often offer financial incentives. Despite efforts to reduce the amount of waste generated, consumers and businesses still create a substantial amount of waste. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that each American generates 4.3 pounds of waste daily. Much of this waste can be reduced, reused, or recycled to minimize the strain on the environment and municipal waste management. A very simplistic example is consumers using refillable coffee mugs to minimize the number of disposable cups and lids being discarded.

### **Recycling Plan**

#### **Step 1: Identify your recycling program coordinator**

The facility manager or their designee should plan and oversee the recycling program. This individual should be motivated, have a good rapport with staff and customers, and takes an interest in waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. Announce the program and the new recycling coordinator to all staff to encourage cooperation and compliance. The recycling coordinator should:

- Establish recycling policy and procedures.
- Interface with staff and with recycling service providers.
- Determine the start date of the program.
- Facilitate education & promotion of recycling by explaining how recycling works and why it is important.
- Track the progress and success of the recycling program.
- Assemble a green team to help plan, implement, evaluate and manage the program. The team should include employees from each area of operation (fueling, cashier, deli, etc.).

#### **Step 2: Conduct a characterization of your waste stream**

A waste characterization is the process used to quantify the types of wastes and recyclables being generated. You literally inspect, identify, and weigh the types of materials discarded. This characterization will help you identify recycling and waste prevention opportunities, potential savings from reduced disposal costs, potential revenue from the sale of recyclables, and establish baseline data for measuring the future effectiveness of the program. To conduct a waste characterization:

- Utilize knowledgeable staff (for guidance see: *Additional Resources - Northeast Recycling Council*), or contact your waste hauler, recycling service provider, or a waste/recycling consultant to perform the characterization.
- Small businesses may request a free characterization of their waste stream by contacting DSWA at 800-404-7080 or DNREC at 302-739-9403. Requests for a free waste characterization will be addressed on a first come, first serve basis as resources allow.



### **Step 3: Identify materials currently discarded**

Work with your waste hauler, recycling service provider, or waste/recycling consultant to analyze the information collected during your waste characterization. Once you see what you're discarding, identify opportunities for waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. Request that your vendors use reusable shipping crates, pallets, and totes instead of cardboard boxes. Offer a small discount to customers who bring their own coffee cups, or install air dryers in the restrooms. Finally, identify recyclable items. These materials, commonly found in C-Stores, can be commingled in one single-stream recycling bin:

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Corrugated cardboard              | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum and steel cans        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magazines and catalogs          | <input type="checkbox"/> Glass bottles and jars            | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone books                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boxboard                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic bottles, jugs, containers | <input type="checkbox"/> Carryout bags (combine into 1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed paper (office, junk mail) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tetra-pack milk & juice boxes     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                    |

A mid-Atlantic convenience store chain performed a waste characterization in May, 2012. The study showed that food waste represented 40% of their total waste. Single-stream recyclables (particularly paper, corrugated, glass bottles, cans, plastic containers, and plastic bags) represented another 25% to 30% of their waste. Another 10% to 15% of their waste was recyclable, but only with an expensive component of labor and equipment. Their goal for the near term is to achieve a 30% recycling rate.

Large quantities of certain materials may be sorted for very cost-effective recycling, or even for a profit. These materials, commonly found in C-Stores, may be beneficial to recycle separately:

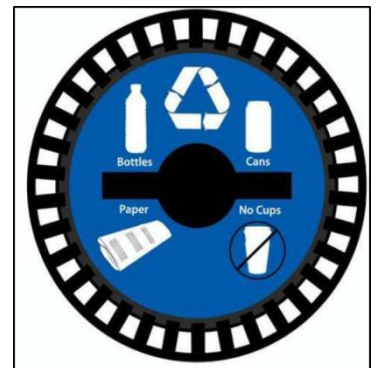
- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corrugated cardboard  | <input type="checkbox"/> Used motor oil/oil absorbents | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscaping waste (organic) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office paper  | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic film/shrink wrap      | <input type="checkbox"/> Scrap metal                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle batteries   | <input type="checkbox"/> Food waste                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronics                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waste tires   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pallets                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fluorescent lamps and bulbs (consider using high efficiency ballasts and lamps (T-5 & T-8)) |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ink and toner cartridges (check your suppliers' take-back programs)                         |  |  |

For more information see: [www.recycling.delaware.gov](http://www.recycling.delaware.gov) or [www.dswa.com/programs.asp](http://www.dswa.com/programs.asp)

### **Step 4: Determine collection program logistics**

Making recycling easy and convenient will boost levels of staff and customer participation. Recycling should be as easy as throwing something in the trash, so recycling containers should be placed wherever you currently have trash containers (dispenser islands, near the cash registers, entrances and exits, near vehicle vacuuming stations, etc.). Take the following criteria into consideration when choosing containers:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Placement</li><li>• Location</li><li>• Capacity</li><li>• Durability</li><li>• Ease of handling</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cost</li><li>• Shape</li><li>• Color</li><li>• Opening type</li><li>• % recycled content</li></ul> |
|---|--|



The recycling containers should look different from trash cans, be easily identified, and be clearly labeled. Labels can be self-made or purchased. Lids should have restricted openings. Consider choosing blue bins for recycling, green for compost, and black for trash. Use clear liners so staff can easily identify recyclables from trash once bins are emptied.

Other considerations include:

- Is your recyclable storage area of adequate size for your hauler to pick up?
- Do your recyclable materials need to be crushed, baled, banded or compacted?
- Is a recycling service needed for a specific material stream?

### **Step 5: Select a recycling service provider**

You may choose one or more recycling or composting service providers to collect your materials for processing. For a list of vendors, check the phonebook, do an internet search, or visit [www.dswa.com/universalRecyclingServices.asp](http://www.dswa.com/universalRecyclingServices.asp). While

many waste haulers offer recycling services, some companies specialize in providing strictly recycling services. Services might include baling, shredding, crushing, or compacting as well as transporting and marketing the recyclable materials. Discuss collection schedules and options with a variety of service providers and request a billing structure that will reduce your waste disposal costs. Monitor how full collection dumpsters are and make arrangements to adjust the collection schedule based on volume. Finally, if you choose not to use a collection service, you can self-haul your recyclables directly to a recycling processor.

### **Step 6: Outreach and Education**

Before you launch the program, spend time promoting your recycling effort and educating staff about recycling procedures. Implementation will require an ability to motivate participation. Once the program has begun, you should reinforce good habits and keep staff and customers interested in the program.



Choose a launch date to officially start the program. Alert staff well in advance and prepare simple information explaining the benefits and procedures to promote the program. Organize training sessions for staff that may have new duties. Prepare a press release to publicly announce and promote the program – and your business! Plan an event to launch the program and to generate enthusiasm. Involve local business and government leaders with a “ribbon-cutting” ceremony.

For a recycling program to be effective you must educate staff and customers. This can be done in a variety of ways including:

- Download and distribute the ‘How to Recycle’ guide in both English and Spanish at: [www.recycling.delaware.gov](http://www.recycling.delaware.gov).
- Meet with staff to discuss the recycling procedures and program goals.
- Inform vendors about the program.
- Place recycling information in obvious and readily available locations.
- Stress the importance that recyclables be kept free of trash and contamination.
- Place labeling and signage with recycling information on trash and recycling containers and dumpsters.
- Display recycling goals and/or promote the amount that has been recycled on signs and displays.
- Request feedback from staff regarding contamination or improper handling of recyclables.
- Send out press releases to publicize your recycling program and announcing milestones.
- Encourage participation and publicize program successes through newsletters, e-mails, posters, and new employee orientation.

### **Step 7: Sustaining the program**

Monitor and evaluate the recycling program on a regular basis. Request a monthly disposal report from your hauler stating the amounts of recyclables by material type and disposal data in tonnage or cubic yard measurements.

- Post results and accomplishments listing the quantity of recyclables collected, total waste diverted, and revenue from the commodities.
- Percentage of waste diverted by your recycling program – compare the tonnage of recyclables collected to the tonnage of waste generated.
- Maintain records for charges for hauling waste and recyclables. Calculate savings from reduced disposal costs.
- Request contamination reports from recycling hauler or perform routine inspections of recyclables.
- Monitor progress and make the diversion rates mean something – translate the data into terms the average person can understand.
- Consult DNREC or a private consultant for help.

### **Additional strategies for waste reduction**

In addition to recycling, the following waste reduction strategies can reduce operating costs associated with unnecessary material use and waste.

**Reduce** – Purchase, consume, and discard less material. Control the volume and waste types generated by your business through upstream purchasing decisions. Source reduction prevents the generation of waste in the first place, and is a preferred method of waste management.

- Encourage customers to use their own travel mugs or store-logo cups by providing a discount

- Make plastic carryout bags available upon request only
- Install air dryers in restrooms
- Serve condiments in bulk dispensers instead of single-use disposables
- Encourage suppliers to reduce packaging in purchases and shipping
- Switch to renewable, refillable, or returnable containers
- Use effective food inventory control methods to minimize wastes
- Purchase energy efficient light bulbs and fixtures
- Reuse printer cartridges by participating in take-back programs
- Implement double-sided copying as the default setting on all printers and copiers
- Purchase or donate surplus materials

**Reuse** – Reusing items by repairing, donating, or selling them is even better than recycling! Unlike recycling, reusing items means they do not have to be processed before they can be used again. Encourage reuse of materials:

- Provide a small discount to customers who bring their own shopping bag
- Set-up a ‘Reuse Area’ in the workplace for supplies you no longer need
- Provide reusable mugs, plates, and cutlery in the lunch room (as well as a place to wash these items)
- Compost food waste on-site, or have it collected by a local composting facility
- Donate leftover food: work with local churches, food banks, and homeless shelters
- Request that your vendors use reusable shipping crates, pallets, and totes instead of cardboard boxes

**Buy Recycled** – If you are not buying recycled content products you are not recycling! Purchase products that are re-manufactured or made from post-consumer waste recycled content such as:

- Office paper and receipt tape
- Paper towels, napkins, and toilet tissue
- Plastic carryout bags
- Recycling and trash containers
- Toner and printer cartridges
- Packaging



**Additional Resources:**

**DNREC Universal Recycling Grant and Low Interest Loan Program:**

[www.dnrec.delaware.gov/services/Pages/Loans.aspx](http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/services/Pages/Loans.aspx)

**Delaware Recycles:** [www.recycling.delaware.gov](http://www.recycling.delaware.gov) and

[www.facebook.com/DelawareRecycles](https://www.facebook.com/DelawareRecycles)

(Download ‘How to Recycle’ guide, Commercial Recycling toolkits)

**DNREC, Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances:** [www.dnrec.delaware.gov/whs/awm](http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/whs/awm) or call (302) 739-9403

**Delaware Solid Waste Authority (DSWA):** [www.dswa.com](http://www.dswa.com) or call 1-800-404-7080.

**Electronic waste:** For guidance in disposing of electronic waste and take-back programs

DSWA: [www.dswa.com/programs\\_EGRbusiness.asp](http://www.dswa.com/programs_EGRbusiness.asp)

Step Initiative: [www.step-initiative.org](http://www.step-initiative.org)

EPA: [www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/ecycling/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/ecycling/index.htm)

**EPA Environmentally-Preferable Purchasing Program:** [www.epa.gov/epp](http://www.epa.gov/epp) (Costs and benefits of purchasing choices)

**EPA Food Recovery Challenge:** [www.epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge](http://www.epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge) (Food waste reduction)

**Green Business:** [www.greenbiz.com](http://www.greenbiz.com) **Northeast Recycling Council:** [www.nerc.org](http://www.nerc.org)

[www.nerc.org/documents/town\\_business/recycling\\_makes\\_senSe\\_guide.pdf](http://www.nerc.org/documents/town_business/recycling_makes_senSe_guide.pdf) (see Appendix C)

**Product Stewardship:** [www.productstewardship.us/index.cfm](http://www.productstewardship.us/index.cfm)

**Special Wastes:** [www.dnrec.delaware.gov/whs/awm/Recycling/Pages/Recycling.aspx](http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/whs/awm/Recycling/Pages/Recycling.aspx) or [www.dswa.com/programs.asp](http://www.dswa.com/programs.asp)

(Some material streams including: batteries, fluorescent lamps and bulbs, ink and toner cartridges, paint, prescription medication, scrap tires, used motor oil, and white goods may require special handling)

**Sustainable Business:** [www.sustainablebusiness.com](http://www.sustainablebusiness.com)

**The Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act:** [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ210/pdf/PLAW-104publ210.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ210/pdf/PLAW-104publ210.pdf)

Encourages food donation to nonprofits by minimizing liability, in accordance with the Model Good Samaritan Food

**US Green Building Council:** [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

**More recycling information:** [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com)