

Commercial Recycling Toolkit

Restaurants



Recycling Waste Makes Good Business Sense

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. Restaurants can reduce waste by purchasing in bulk, buying items with less packaging, composting food waste, 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 water bottles to minimize the number of plastic bottles being discarded. Consumers also have a financial incentive in this example because tap water is far less expensive than bottled water.

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 take 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 (kitchen, bussers, servers, managers, 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 boxes and totes instead of cardboard boxes. Install air dryers in the restrooms. Buy beverages and cleaning supplies in concentrate and condiments in bulk. Finally, identify recyclable items. These materials, commonly found in restaurants, 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"/> Plastic buckets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed paper (office, junk mail) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tetra-pack milk & juice boxes | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

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

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corrugated cardboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic film/shrink wrap | <input type="checkbox"/> Pallets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Food waste | <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 program) | | |

For more information see: www.recycling.delaware.gov or www.dswa.com/programs.asp

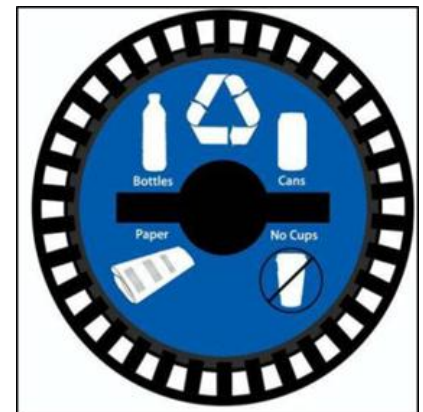
Step 4: Determine collection program logistics

Making recycling easy and convenient will boost levels of participation. Recycling should be as easy as throwing something in the trash, so recycling containers should be placed wherever you currently have trash containers (kitchen, office, hostess station, parking lot, entrances and exits, etc.). Take the following criteria into consideration when choosing containers:

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

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 bins for composting, and black for trash. Use clear liners so staff can easily identify recyclables and compostables 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?



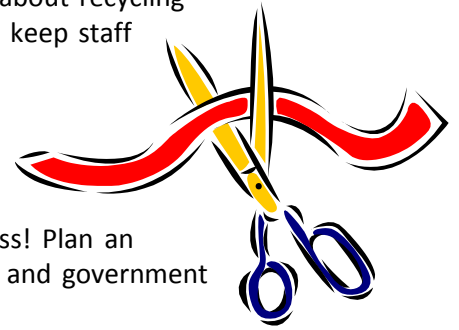
Step 5: Select a recycling service provider

You may choose one or more recycling or food 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. 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 or composting processor.

Step 6: Outreach and education

Before you launch the program, promote your recycling effort and educate staff about recycling procedures. 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.
- 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.

- Make plastic carryout bags and drinking straws available upon request only
- Eliminate single use packets of sugar, cream, syrup, butter, etc. - try pitchers, sugar shakers, and ramekins
- Instead of paper placemats and coasters, leave tables bare
- Use cloth towels instead of paper towels in the kitchen
- Encourage customers using self-serve dispensers to take only as much as they need
- Buy beverages and cleaning supplies in concentrate or bulk form
- Place rubber mats around bus and dishwashing stations to eliminate breakage

- Request products with minimal packaging from your suppliers
- Use effective food inventory control methods to minimize wastes
- Purchase energy efficient light bulbs and fixtures
- Purchase locally grown produce and other foods
- Install air dryers in restrooms

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:

- Refill condiment bottles from bulk supplies
- Provide reusable mugs, plates, and cutlery
- Use a linen service instead of paper napkins and tablecloths
- Have food wastes collected by a local composting facility
- Donate extra food to a local food bank
- Request that your vendors use reusable shipping crates, pallets, and totes instead of cardboard boxes
- Set-up a ‘Reuse Area’ for supplies you no longer need
- Reuse printer cartridges by participating in take-back programs

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:

- Anti-fatigue mats made from recycled tires
- Paper products (office paper, receipt tape, napkins, paper towels, toilet tissue, etc.) made from 100% post-consumer recycled paper

Additional Resources:

Delaware’s Universal Recycling Grant and Low Interest Loan Program: www.dnrec.delaware.gov/services/Pages/Loans.aspx

Delaware Recycles: www.recycling.delaware.gov and 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 or call (302) 739-9403

Delaware Solid Waste Authority (DSWA): 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

Step Initiative: www.step-initiative.org

EPA: www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/ecycling/index.htm

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

EPA Food Recovery Challenge: www.epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge (Food waste reduction)

Green Business: www.greenbiz.com

Northeast Recycling Council: www.nerc.org/documents/town_business/recycling_makes_sense_guide.pdf (See Appendix C)

Product Stewardship: www.productstewardship.us/index.cfm

Special Wastes: www.dnrec.delaware.gov/whs/awm/Recycling/Pages/Recycling.aspx or 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

The Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act: 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

More recycling information: www.earth911.com