

Waste Prevention

California Integrated Waste Management Board

Ideas

Waste Prevention Ideas

Begin by examining the wastes your organization generates, and where those wastes come from. Then identify ways to improve efficiency and eliminate waste. The ideas below can help you decide what waste prevention practices to adopt.

Purchasing

- Establish purchasing guidelines to encourage waste prevention (durable, concentrated, reusable, high quality).
- Consider length of warranty and availability of repair services when purchasing equipment.
- Substitute less toxic materials for toxic materials (e.g., vegetable-based inks, water-based glue, markers and paints).
- Order merchandise with minimal packaging or layers of packaging.
- Request that deliveries be shipped in returnable containers.
- Order supplies by voice mail or electronic mail.
- Use optical scanners, which give more details about inventory, allowing more precise ordering.

Packaging

- Eliminate unneeded packaging or layers of packaging.
- Use lightweight packaging.
- Use reusable boxes and mailbags for shipping to branch offices, stores, and warehouses.
- Reuse packing materials (e.g., foam peanuts, bubblewrap and cardboard boxes) or find someone who can.
- Set up a system for returning cardboard boxes and foam peanuts to distributors for reuse.
- Return, reuse, and repair wooden pallets and spools.

Writing/Printing Paper

- Make double-sided copies whenever possible.
- Reuse envelopes and use two-way envelopes.

- Route or circulate memos, periodicals and reports, rather than distributing individual copies.
- Use voice or electronic mail or post memos on a central bulletin board.
- Make scratch pads from used paper.
- Use outdated letterhead for in-house memos.
- Eliminate unnecessary forms. Double-side forms or redesign them to fit on a half sheet.
- Use narrow-ruled notebooks.
- Save documents on floppy disks instead of printing hard copies.
- Use central files for hard copies.
- Print more words on each page (e.g., smaller font, narrow margins).
- Proof documents on screen before printing.
- Copy drafts on paper already printed on one side.
- Use same draft of report for corrections by several people.
- Accept final in-house documents with hand corrections.
- Seek methods to reduce production errors.
- Donate old magazines or journals to hospitals, clinics, or libraries.
- Keep mailing lists current/one copy per address.
- Call or mail postcards directly to senders asking that your business be removed from mailing lists.
- Reduce advertising mail by writing to: Direct Marketing Association, Mail Preference Service, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008. Send the various versions of your name and ask that they be removed from mailing lists.

Over-stocked/Surplus Items

- Set up an area for employees to exchange used items.
- Advertise surplus and reusable waste items through a commercial waste exchange. CALMAX is a materials exchange network in California; services are available at no cost to users. Call (916) 255-2369 for a free catalog and materials listing form.

Equipment

- Rent instead of buying equipment that is used only occasionally.
- Use remanufactured office equipment.
- Invest in equipment that facilitates waste prevention, such as:
 - high quality, durable, repairable equipment;
 - copiers and printers that make two-sided copies;
 - modem cards; folder/sealers
- Institute maintenance practices that prolong the life of copiers, computers, and other equipment.
- Reclaim reusable parts from old equipment.
- Use refilled or rebuilt fax and printer cartridges.
- Sell or give old furniture and equipment to employees or donate it to a local charity.
- Find uses for worn tires (e.g., landscaping, swings).
- Use retreaded tires on company vehicles. Rotate tires on a regular basis to prolong tire life. Keep tires properly inflated.
- Install reusable heating, ventilation and air conditioning filters.
- Replace incandescent with fluorescent lights.

Landscaping/Organics

- Use a mulching mower or retrofit your mower to leave grass clippings on the lawn (grasscycling).
- Compost grass clippings and leaves or ask your landscaper to send trimmings to a composting facility (check with your recycling coordinator about any composting requirements).
- Use compost as a topsoil amendment or request that your landscaper use it.
- Choose a landscape design that needs low maintenance and generates little waste (e.g., perennials, slow growing shrubs).
- Buy a chipper and turn tree and shrub clippings into mulch.

Food and Personal Service

- Use durable towels, tablecloths, napkins, dishes, flatware, cups and glasses.
- Encourage employees to bring their own mugs and utensils. Ask food vendor to offer discounts on beverages served in a customer's own mug.

- Buy company mugs; stop providing disposable cups.
- Encourage customers to take home extra food.
- Offer smaller portions (e.g., child's menu).
- Provide condiments in bulk dispensers.
- Arrange for food bank pick-up of unserved food. Call Food Chain 800 845-3008.
- Sell or give food scraps to farmers who can process them for feed (check with local health and agricultural agencies).
- Compost vegetable food scraps. (Check with your recycling coordinator concerning local guidelines or restrictions.)
- Purchase a worm bin for your office to convert food wastes (banana peels, coffee grounds) into high quality potting soil (vermicompost).
- Buy reusable coffee filters or unbleached disposable filters.
- Reuse trash can liners or eliminate where possible.
- Consider using cloth roll towels, hot air dryers, large paper rolls in restrooms, or buy lighter/smaller-sized paper towels.

Consumer Choices

- Teach your customers about the importance of waste prevention. Effective tools for getting the message across include: promotional campaigns; brochures and newsletters (remember to use recycled paper); banners; newspaper ads; product displays and store signs.
- Encourage customers to bring their own bag(s) and compliment them when they do.
- Offer customers a rebate when they reuse grocery bags, containers, mugs, and cups.
- Offer customers waste prevention choices such as:
 - items in bulk or concentrate;
 - items in refillable bottles;
 - solar-powered items, such as calculators, flashlights; and
 - durable and repairable merchandise.
- Encourage customers to return reusable items (e.g., metal hangers to dry cleaners).

