

Waste Reduction Tips

Waste Reduction Ideas for Offices--Paper, Paper Everywhere!

This list of waste reduction ideas is intended to help you think of new ways to prevent waste and save money. Brainstorming with others is bound to result in more ideas!

Reduce

- Eliminate unnecessary reports and reduce report size.
- Eliminate unnecessary forms and redesign to use less paper.
- Don't use cover sheets on faxes.
- Make fewer copies. Share copies and don't make more copies than you need.
- Print or copy on both sides.
- Proof documents on screen and preview before printing.
- Set up computers to automatically print two-sided.
- Use light weight paper.
- Remove duplicate names and out-of-date entries from mailing lists.
- Take steps to reduce unsolicited mail.
- Design mailers which avoid the use of envelopes (fold and staple the paper).
- Use electronic mail and voice mail.
- Post announcements on bulletin boards or circulate copies.
- Circulate memos, documents, reports, and publications.
- Allow internal documents to be circulated with legible minor hand corrections rather than retyping drafts.

Reuse

- Collect paper that has been used on one side and reuse as draft paper in fax machines, for scratch pads and copies (in copiers with multiple trays, one tray can be stocked with draft paper).
- Buy only copiers and printers that will make two-sided copies reliably.
- Reuse envelopes by placing a label over the old address.
- Use reusable envelopes for interoffice mail.
- Use outdated letterhead for in-house memos.
- Reuse file folders.
- Shred newspapers and reuse for packaging.
- Investigate whether local libraries, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, etc. could use your old trade journals or magazines.

Recycle

- Estimate how much waste paper your office produces and arrange to have it picked up by your waste hauler or a recycler.
- If your office is small, consider combining your recyclables with other small offices nearby.
- Provide desktop recycling containers for employees.

- Provide clearly labeled recycling bins near copiers, shipping and receiving areas, and in employee eating areas to collect white paper, mixed paper, newspaper, magazines, cardboard as well as non-paper products (glass, aluminum, plastic, etc).
- Don't buy paper that is a contaminant in recycling, e.g. thermal fax paper, glossy/plastic coatings, plastic windows, bright colors including goldenrod, laser printer inks, adhesive products.
- Print directly on envelopes rather than using labels.

Make Your Purchases Count

- Buy and use paper with at least 25 percent post consumer recycled content.
- Purchase products with no packaging, less packaging, or reusable packaging.
- Look for products in concentrate or bulk form.
- Request that deliveries be shipped in returnable containers and return cardboard boxes to distributor.
- Ask vendors to take back packaging. In some cases they may be able to reuse it.
- Prior to recycling or disposing, check to see if anyone can reuse packaging materials. Cardboard and polystyrene may be used for art projects. Some mail companies are willing to reuse packaging (e.g., check with Mail Boxes, Etc.)
- Repack in the same cartons that transported materials to the facility.
- Set up an area for employees to exchange used items.

Food, Glorious Food

- Encourage employees to keep reusable cups, plates, and silverware at their desks.
- Encourage employees to bring lunch to work in reusable containers.
- Work with cafeteria and food vendors to reduce food and packaging waste by providing condiments in bulk dispensers, giving customers a discount when they use their own cups, etc.
- If possible, arrange to compost food scraps (no meat, grease, or dairy products).

Transportation

- Encourage employees to take public transportation by offering discounted tickets or passes.
- Provide reserved parking spaces for carpoolers.
- Use public transportation for office business.
- Encourage biking and walking by providing bike racks and showers.

Reduce Toxics

- Use vegetable-based inks when printing.
- Use nontoxic cleaners and washable rags for cleaning.

Source: Business Resource Efficiency & Waste Reduction <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BizWaste/>
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