



## What Is Waste Reduction?

Waste reduction is the result of practicing both source reduction and recycling. Source reduction, the most effective means of solid waste management, is defined as reducing the amount (or toxicity) of waste that is generated. Source reduction efforts in combination with recycling programs equal waste reduction.

## Practicing Source Reduction Can Save Money!



While recycling is a good waste management strategy, practicing source reduction is better. If waste is not generated in the first place, businesses will save on handling and transportation costs, whether the waste would end up as refuse or a recyclable material. The first item on a small business' waste reduction agenda should be to implement a waste audit to determine what can be reduce, reused or recycled. Then establish a team of associates to devise a plan for a comprehensive source reduction and recycling program.

## Source reduction and reuse ideas:

1. Provide reusable mugs for staff and use at meetings.
2. Stock kitchen with reusable cups, plates, tableware and napkins.
3. Provide a water cooler or install a filter on the faucet to cut down on individual bottled water.
4. Encourage staff to bring a waste-free lunch in reusable food containers, napkins and bags.
5. Set printer on double-sided default settings.
6. Establish a "Be nice, use it twice box" for paper that has only been used on one side. Use other side for faxes or drafts.
7. Eliminate a cover page when sending a fax.
8. Reduce spacing and font size to keep documents to one page.
9. Make note pads from old letterhead.
10. Distribute company memos and newsletters electronically.
11. Subscribe to online newspapers and newsletters.

### **Source reduction and reuse ideas continued:**

12. Cancel junk mail [dmachoice.org](http://dmachoice.org) - [catalogchoice.org](http://catalogchoice.org) - [privacyrights.org](http://privacyrights.org)
13. Reuse cardboard boxes, bubble wrap and packing peanuts – or give to a UPS/FEDX store.
14. Purchase recycled-content office supplies – combine procurement with other departments whenever possible.
15. Have a central location for office supplies to avoid surplus.
16. Ask suppliers not to use excessive packaging materials – purchase in bulk when possible.
17. Repair items when possible.
18. Donate gently-used equipment to charities or schools.

### **Small Business and Recycling**

After determining and implementing source reduction measures, small businesses may wish to explore the feasibility of embarking on a recycling program. Small businesses may not always generate large volumes of recyclables required to implement a cost-effective collection program, and recycling service providers may not be willing to pick-up small quantities of recyclables. However, small businesses should not be discouraged as there are ways to overcome the recycling challenges posted to them.

### **Suggestions for beginning a recycling program:**

1. Ask your area's recycling vendor if they would be willing to pick-up your recyclables when they are in the area handling larger accounts. Based on your waste audit findings, be specific of the materials you generate.
2. Seek out a group of businesses which jointly would generate a significant volume for the same types of recyclables. A cooperative program for recyclables collection may result in lower costs per business. The same may be true for disposal services.
3. Start out conservatively and then expand. Consider collecting corrugated cardboard and office paper to begin with and then expand into additional materials as you and your staff become acclimated with the recycling process. Purchase office supplies with recyclability in mind.
4. Review SWANCC's *Closing the Loop* brochure or visit [swancc.org](http://swancc.org) (Green Pages Directory) for recycling programs for special materials, such as ink jet cartridges, cell phones, electronics, CLF bulbs, and more. Also see *Waste Reduction Solutions* brochure.

### **Help Close the Recycling "Loop" by Purchasing Recycled Products**

Consider the fact that 18 million tons of paper are purchased by American businesses each year! The environmental impact of buying recycled materials is significant. Every ton of recycled paper purchased saves 2.5 barrels of oil, 4,100 kilowatt hours of electricity and 2.5 cubic yards of landfill space. When businesses buy recycled products, it creates market demand for recycled

materials. A successful recycling effort requires three major components: collection, processing/remanufacturing, and procurement of recycled-content products. Quality of recycled content paper goods and other products, as well as pricing, are becoming increasingly market competitive. It has been said that if you are not buying recycled products, you're not truly recycling! Visit SWANCC's *Eco-Friendly Marketplace* guide for sources.

### Paper Reduction Resources

- Environmental Paper Network - <http://environmentalpaper.org/our-resources/fact-sheets/>
- American Forest & Paper Association – [Afandpa.org](http://afandpa.org)

### Energy Efficiency & Water Conservation Measures

1. Purchase Energy Star appliances (energystar.gov)
2. Plug electronics in power strips – turn off on nights, weekends and Holidays
3. Set computers and printers for sleep mode
4. Use rechargeable batteries
5. Switch to energy-efficient lights as old bulbs burn out
6. Fix leaky faucets and toilets
7. Provide real plants to filter the air naturally

### In Summary

From an economic and environmental standpoint, it is best to implement waste reduction measures first. Decreasing the quantity of materials that must be disposed of or recycled is more economical than paying to collect and transport materials to a landfill or recycling plant. From a business perspective, recycling efforts support good community values and are an important component of an overall waste reduction program.



**THINK BEFORE YOU THROW**

