

# Commercial Recycling Toolkit

## Supermarkets



### 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 waste reduction 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 help you set up a new recycling program or help you evaluate your current programs.

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. Supermarkets can reduce their waste by purchasing in bulk, buying items with less packaging, composting food waste, and switching to reusable instead of single-use items. In addition to benefiting the environment, these efforts often offer the financial incentive of lower expenses in purchases. Despite efforts to reduce the amount of waste generated, 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 have a financial incentive in this example as well because municipal water is far cheaper 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 key employees such as staff from the areas where recyclables are generated, members of the housekeeping staff and grounds crew.

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



A waste characterization quantifies the types of wastes and recyclables being generated at your facility. The waste stream is inspected, and the types of materials are identified and weighed. A waste characterization will help you identify recycling and waste prevention opportunities like potential savings from reduced disposal costs or potential revenue from the sale of recyclables. It will also help you establish baseline data. 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 the materials to be collected**

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 suppliers use reusable shipping boxes and totes instead of cardboard boxes. Install air dryers in the restrooms. Buy cleaning supplies in concentrate. Finally, identify recyclable items. These common materials 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 cost-effective recycling. Your store may already separate corrugated cardboard and plastic film. The following materials may also be beneficial to recycle separately.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rigid plastics  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pallets              | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic film/shrink wrap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food waste  | <input type="checkbox"/> Corrugated cardboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ink and toner cartridges (Many suppliers provide take-back programs)                                    |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fluorescent lamps and bulbs (consider using high efficiency fluorescent ballasts and lamps (T-5 & T-8)) |   |   |

See also: [www.recycling.delaware.gov](http://www.recycling.delaware.gov), [www.dswa.com/programs.asp](http://www.dswa.com/programs.asp), and [www.recyclegroceryplastics.org](http://www.recyclegroceryplastics.org).

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

- About 350 million lbs. of recyclable rigid plastics are generated in U.S. supermarkets each year.
- Rx stock bottles represent about 50% by weight of rigid plastics generated in each store.
- Time studies have shown no additional labor is needed to recycle grocery rigid plastics.
- Training store associates requires only a few minutes per individual in each department.

*Source: The Association of Postconsumer Plastic Recyclers ([www.recyclegroceryplastics.org](http://www.recyclegroceryplastics.org))*

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

Making recycling easy and convenient will boost levels of staff participation. Inconsistent participation or failure to follow recycling procedures will affect the yields of your program—both in terms of the quantity of the recyclables recovered and their quality (i.e. how much contamination is in your recycling stream). Recycling should be as easy as throwing something in the trash, so recycling containers should be placed wherever you currently have trash containers (cashier stations, loading dock, dumpster area, parking lot, entrances and exits, etc.). Take the following criteria into consideration when choosing containers:

- |             |                    |              |                      |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| • Placement | • Durability       | • Cost       | • Opening type       |
| • Capacity  | • Ease of handling | • Appearance | • % 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, black for trash, and green for food wastes. Use clear liners for recycling so staff can easily identify recyclables from trash, and use compostable bags for food wastes. 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](http://www.dswa.com). While many waste haulers offer recycling services, some specialize in providing strictly recycling or composting 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. If you choose not to use a collection service, you can also self-haul 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 staff to participate. 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 who will be involved with the implementation of the collection program. Prepare a press release to publicly announce and promote the program (and promote your business). Consider an event to launch the program and to generate some enthusiasm. Involve local business and government leaders with a “ribbon-cutting” ceremony.

For a recycling program to be effective you must educate staff. 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 with staff that recyclables be kept free of trash and contamination.
- Place labeling and signage with recycling information on office bins, guest trash and recycling containers, carts, containers, and dumpsters. (examples: “Recycling only – No trash” and “Trash only - No Recycling”)
- Display recycling goals and/or promote the amount that has been recycled on signs and displays.
- Request feedback from staff regarding contamination or issues surrounding the improper handling of recyclables.
- Send out press releases to publicize your recycling program and announcing milestones.
- Consider sustainable purchasing or green procurement policies that specify to buy recycled or refurbished with post-consumer content and bid specifications that give preference to products made from recycled materials. Control volume and types of waste generated by your business through purchasing decisions.
- 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 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 assistance.

### **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 throw away less. Use upstream control of the volume and types of wastes generated by your business through purchasing decisions. Source reduction actually prevents the generation of waste in the first place, making it the preferred method of waste management. Methods may include:

- Encourage suppliers to reduce packaging in purchases and shipping

- Discourage the use of disposable items such as plastic straws and stir sticks in deli area
- Offer locally grown produce and other foods
- Consider installing air dryers in restrooms to cut down on paper towel usage
- Use renewable, refillable, or returnable containers whenever possible
- Encourage staff to bring their own travel mug or water bottle for beverages
- Use long-lasting, energy efficient light bulbs and fixtures
- Reuse laser and 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 office materials

**Reuse** – Reusing items by repairing, donating, or selling them. Reuse is even better than recycling because items do not have to be reprocessed before they can be used again.

- Offer incentives for customers to bring their own reusable grocery and produce bags
- Request that your vendors use reusable shipping crates, pallets, and totes instead of cardboard
- Set-up a ‘Reuse Area’ in the workplace for supplies you no longer need
- Use reusable mugs, plates, and cutlery in the lunch room
- Have food wastes collected by a local composting facility
- Donate extra food to a local food bank

**Buy Recycled** – Purchasing products that are re-manufactured or made from recycled content materials such as:

- Paper products (office paper, receipt tape, napkins, paper towels, toilet tissue, etc.) made from 100% post-consumer recycled paper
- Anti-fatigue mats made from recycled tires
- Shopping baskets made from recycled plastic
- Toner and printer cartridges
- Plastic and paper shopping bags

### **Additional Resources:**

**Delaware’s 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](http://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.

**Rigid Grocery Store Plastics:** See the ‘How to Recycle Grocery Rigid Plastics Guide’ [www.recyclegroceryplastics.org](http://www.recyclegroceryplastics.org)

**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)

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