

# guidance

## How to Create a Workplace Recycling Program (Earth 911)

The following 8 steps should be taken when building a recycling program at the workplace:

1. **Select a Recycling Coordinator**
2. **Decide What to Collect**
3. **Choose a Collection Method**
4. **Choose a Hauling Option**
5. **Set Up Recycling Bins and Guidelines**
6. **Monitor Your Program**
7. **Promote Your Program through Education**
8. **The Role of the Custodial Staff**

### 1. Select a Recycling Coordinator

Accountability will be important to the success of your recycling program. Who is going to be at the forefront of this effort? This is especially important at the beginning of any program. Finding the right person to head this up is crucial – whether the individual has volunteered or is selected. An ideal recycling coordinator will be:

- Enthusiastic about recycling and/or the environment
- Well-organized
- Understand the importance of good communication
- Familiar with starting, overseeing and maintaining programs
- In contact with the company's waste haulers, janitorial staff or contracts

How much time and effort will the responsibilities for recycling take? It will depend on your employees' participation. After establishing a program, one hour every month can be enough to maintain a successful program. Canvassing for volunteers may allow the best candidates to identify themselves.

### 2. Decide What to Collect

Consider that paper makes up an average of 37.5 percent of the waste stream into landfills. What other wastes does your brewery use that can be recycled? What do your employees use? What supplies do you have on hand? Take a walk around the brewery and start making a list.

Here are a few possibilities:

- Computer paper
- Aluminum cans
- Batteries
- Light bulbs
- Computers and accessories
- Glass bottles
- Inkjet/toner cartridges
- Plastic bottles
- Scrap metal
- Telephone books

### 3. Choose a Collection Method

To mix or not to mix? That is a question to ask. After deciding what materials to recycle, determine how to collect them. Does everything have to be separated (multi-stream or separate stream recycling) or can it all be thrown in the same bin (single stream recycling)?

#### Source Separation

Recyclables are separated by specific type.

#### Examples:

- Paper recycling could have many bins including: white paper, colored paper, cardboard, office mail, magazines/catalogs, etc.
- Plastic recycling would have bins for each type of plastic: #1-7

#### Pros:

- Bin items are extremely specific, with fewer questions as to what goes where
- Some separated materials can have a significantly higher market value
- It creates more environmental awareness for employees

#### Cons:

- It requires more recycling bins (and a higher setup cost)
- Your recycling coordinator (and employees) may have to spend time sorting materials
- You may have to find multiple destinations for recyclables if they are source-separated

#### Commingled Collection

Recyclables are mixed together. The separation process happens at a material recovery facility.

#### Examples:

- Paper recycling has one bin to collect all paper
- One bin to collect all other materials including plastics (#1 – 7), metal and glass

#### Pros:

- It is less time-consuming for employees to sort
- It is easier to have a higher participation rates for recycling
- The recycling coordinator will typically have to invest less time and effort in a commingled recycling program

#### Cons:

- Market values may be lower (e.g. mixed office paper may lower the value of computer paper if both are combined)
- Materials may be contaminated more easily if commingled, thereby potentially having the entire load of recyclables rejected
- Less opportunity for employee education about recycling

### 4. Choose a Hauling Option

Be realistic planning how much your business is capable of recycling. You know what materials you are recycling. You've determined your method of collection. You've got full recycling bins. Now how do you get rid of it? Determining how to haul your recyclables away can be one of the greatest challenges. You should be realistic in planning how much your business is capable of recycling.

The following are the most common hauling options available to businesses:

#### Drop-Off Recycling Locations

Once your bins are full, your recycling coordinator, or another volunteer, can drop off materials at a local center.

Earth911.com's recycling locator will help your business find nearby drop-off locations. You can also see what your local Materials Recovery Facility will accept from businesses.

Things to consider when choosing a municipal or commercial drop-off center include:

- Recyclables accepted
- Contamination guidelines
- Minimum quantity requirements
- Prices per recyclable
- Hours of operation
- Payment options

Money earned from selling recyclables can be used to reimburse your recycling coordinator; or, to create a fund for office events and parties.

## Pick-Up Providers

Pick-up services will often require a higher quantity than your business alone can generate. If your company can produce the amount of recyclables required for a service such as this, here is some information on how to find the right pick-up provider for your business:

- Commercial recyclers are often more suited for businesses generating larger volumes of recyclables. Pick-up or hauling fees may apply. They may offer other services including waste hauling, collection bins, educational materials and/or employee training.
- Commercial waste haulers wanting to provide a "complete package" to their customers have started to offer recycling services, because they are able to make up their lost waste hauling fees with recycling revenue. Commercial waste haulers may have volume and contamination requirements, pick-up fees and other requirements. You may be able to reduce your overall waste hauling expense, and only have to deal with one company, for solid waste and recycling.
- Small Haulers may meet the required volume of a commercial recycler or waste hauler. These companies are usually considered "mom and pop" shops. They run smaller routes with fewer trucks, employees and equipment. Larger commercial recycling companies and waste haulers will usually recommend smaller haulers because they buy the recyclables directly from the smaller haulers. Small haulers may also have volume and contamination requirements and pick-up fees.
- Cooperative Recycling allows partnering with neighboring businesses. By pooling your recyclables, you can qualify for pick-up by a commercial recycler or waste hauler. Cooperative recycling is popular in multi-tenant buildings or complexes, strip malls and industrial parks. Cooperative recycling also makes it easy for recyclers to coordinate pick-ups more effectively.
- Back Hauling - Do you work in a rural location? You may have difficulty finding a recycling source. Consider back hauling (or secondhand hauling). For instance, a grocery store could request that its delivery truck backhaul recyclables to a larger metropolitan market if the truck was empty on the return trip anyway. Back hauling may be more challenging to find, and it's only ideal for businesses that receive deliveries in the first place. But it's better than not recycling your materials at all.

## 5. Set up Recycling Bins and Guidelines

Organization is crucial to recycling. No matter what type of recycling program you implement, you'll want to set up clearly-labeled plastic bins in places the office will use them. Some good locations:

- A paper recycling bin and/or ink cartridge recycling bin in the copy room
- Aluminum/glass/plastic recycling bins in the kitchen
- An electronics recycling bin in the storage room

Another issue to consider for your recycling program is contamination. Materials that are contaminated won't be recycled and could ruin larger batches of recycling. Luckily, contamination can easily be avoided by following these steps:

- Rinse out containers, so bins won't get dirty
- Make sure there's no food waste mixed in with recyclables (e.g. cardboard pizza box with oil remains) and that materials aren't mixed (e.g. aluminum cans mixed with paper) if your recycler requires separation
- When in doubt, throw it out

Now it is time to implement your program, and there are several factors to consider, including:

### Internal Collection Container Locations

Your program will only be as effective as how easy it is for employees to participate. Bin quantity and location plays a huge role in this. Here are a few options:

- Desk Side or Desktop Containers All employees will go through paper, if nothing else, from office mail. By placing a paper recycling bin next to the trash at each employee's desk, it will become second nature for them to recycle paper. These can be purchased from a container company, or you can simply use a cardboard box.
- Central Collection Containers These containers are for office common areas, and should be placed strategically in areas where products will be collected. An office copy room is an ideal area for a paper collection container, just like the office kitchen would cater (no pun intended) to aluminum and glass recycling. Common sizes for central containers are 20- to 50-gallon plastic bins.

- Final Collection Containers These are often provided by the recycling service provider and serve as a final destination for all your recyclables before they are picked up or dropped off. Products from desktop and central collection bins will be unloaded into these large bins, which are usually hampers on rollers or plastic barrels with lids and wheels.

## 6. Monitor Your Program

Once your recycling program is in place, monitor its progress to evaluate cost-effectiveness, employee participation and environmental impact.

### Provide Feedback to Employees

Share the success, progress and problems with your company's program periodically with employees. Here's how:

- Use memos, newsletters or company-wide e-mails to distribute updates or milestones about the program
- Inform staff of certain contaminants or individuals/departments with strong participation
- Publicize the quantity your company recycles and revenues over a certain period (month, quarter, year); your hauling company will be able to provide this information
- Calculate/distribute disposal cost savings based on the decrease of office waste
- Survey employees/departments to identify program problems and improvements
- Post informative articles on recycling, source reduction, reuse and/or the environment to further educate staff
- Include information on recycling program participation in the new employee orientation and/or handbook
- Show how successful and creative your program is by promoting your company's efforts outside the business.
- Consider applying for various local, state or federal awards, such as the American Forest & Paper Association's Paper Recycling Awards
- Become an EPA WasteWise business to further improve your program
- Get involved in local, state and/or national recycling and environmental or industry-related organizations.
- Distribute press releases on your program to local newspapers.

## 7. Promote Your Program through Education

Proper staff education is crucial to the success of your recycling program. Here are some tips:

- Education should start before your recycling program, so employees know what to recycle
- Introduce your staff and custodial staff to the program in writing, such as an introductory memo, and at a staff or company meeting
- If you are using a recycling pickup service provider, ask about employee education and training
- Explain how recyclables are collected, what is recyclable, how the program will benefit the environment and the company, as well as other waste reduction and reuse measures that will be implemented
- Show samples of recyclables and non-recyclable materials (contamination) on a board or sign near recycling containers

## 8. The Role of the Custodial Staff

Custodial staff will need to be aware of the program. It is not necessary to use janitorial staff to collect recyclables, but they do need to be aware of the program to prevent unintentional contamination. Here are a few questions to consider if you are thinking of using custodians as part of your recycling program:

- Will custodians empty recycling containers, and will you be charged extra for emptying these containers?
- Can the recycling pickups be incorporated into the existing or a future service contract?
- How often will they empty containers? Nightly? Every other night? Once a week?