



Preventing Waste in the First Place

Waste prevention is even more beneficial than recycling. Why? Activities such as reuse not only save on collection costs, but also cut down on supply expenses. Here are some suggestions you can put into practice.

General Waste Prevention Strategies

- Order supplies and publications more precisely.
- Reuse materials in-house. Set up a “reuse station” area in your business for employee use.
- Donate used or discarded goods and equipment that you can’t sell to charitable organizations, daycare centers and others. Give away magazines to hospitals or clinics and donate trade magazines to colleges.
- Negotiate with suppliers to provide goods in returnable, reusable or recyclable packaging.
- Reuse foam packing peanuts, from incoming shipments, for outgoing mailings. Or, return them to a packaging store. Shredded paper also works well as packing material.
- Repair rather than replace equipment.
- Use durable, reusable products in place of disposables, e.g., ceramic coffee mugs in the lunch room and cloth hand towels or hot air dryers in the restrooms.
- Advertise surplus and reusable items through a free listing service, the Industrial Materials Exchange (IMEX), by calling (206) 296-4899.
- Avoid making extra copies. Make extras later if you need them.
- Post a list of paper-saving copy ideas at every copier.
- Revise forms to reduce form length and eliminate unnecessary duplicates.
- Circulate only one copy of memos and reports, or post in a central location. Better yet, make them available through email.
- Share publications, or photocopy excerpts for distribution, rather than ordering several copies of the same publication.
- Proof documents on the computer screen before printing.
- Use outdated letterhead for in-house memos, documents and drafts.
- Store old documents on disk, CD-ROM or microfiche to minimize the number of hard copies made.
- Create a central filing system instead of maintaining duplicate personal files.
- Reuse manila and padded mailing envelopes.
- Donate binders in reusable condition to libraries, nonprofits or other businesses.
- Keep your mailing list up-to-date by requesting corrections and offering the recipient the option of being removed.

Ideas for Preventing Waste in the Office

- Double-side copies as much as possible.
- Reuse single-sided paper for drafts and note pads.
- Before running a large number of copies, do a one-page test of copier settings. Remember to clear features when finished.
- Purchase remanufactured office equipment.
- Purchase computer printers that do not discharge unused sheets of paper, or make adjustments in existing hardware and software.

- Invest in equipment that facilitates waste prevention, such as:
 - high quality, durable, repairable equipment,
 - copiers that make two-sided copies and
 - dish washing equipment and durable dishware and cutlery.
- Purchase rechargeable batteries for all business applications.
- Use recharged copier, printer and fax cartridges.

Purchasing Practices

- Order merchandise with minimal packaging, in concentrated form and in bulk.
- Ask your suppliers not to overpackage orders and request deliveries be made in returnable containers.
- Replace cardboard boxes and interoffice envelopes with a durable counterpart for shipping to branch offices, stores and warehouses.
- Request a copy of “A Business Guide to Wastewise Packaging” from the Resource Venture. It is filled with practical ideas on reducing incoming and outgoing packaging.

Management Involvement

- Promote paper reduction in your company. Build awareness with contests and signs. Publicize implementation of ideas and the related savings.
- Provide management support that gives departments the authority to examine their paper use and make changes.
- Have a “File Cleaning Day” where the whole office collects single-sided documents and makes them available for rough drafts and scratch pads, or provides them to an outside user, such as a daycare center.

At Your Service

The Resource Venture provides *free* information, assistance and referrals to help Seattle businesses improve their environmental performance. We are a partnership of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and Seattle Public Utilities.



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