

# office

## POLLUTION PREVENTION

Businesses and corporations are responsible for more than 67 percent of the non-hazardous waste generated in the United States. Yet very few have invested in waste reduction technologies or implemented pollution prevention policies, such as avoiding waste creation in the beginning or environmentally-sound recycling.

Whether your company has two employees or two thousand, pollution prevention is an achievable goal with many benefits. When we prevent pollution, we save energy, conserve resources, reduce pollutants and waste, lessen exposure to harmful materials, and save money. Changing habits isn't easy, but you can make a difference by remembering to follow these basic principles:

- REDUCE the amount of waste discarded or released to the environment,
- REUSE containers and recovered materials, and
- RECYCLE as much as possible, from waste oil to waste paper.

The suggestions in this brochure will help you get started.

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- Incorporate waste reduction goals throughout the company and get employees involved by offering incentives for cooperation and for the development of new methods to reduce waste.
  - Establish a committee of representatives from all areas of operation to oversee reduction and recycling efforts and to come up with new ideas.
  - Develop an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) program. Compared to similar competing products, EPP products contain recycled content, minimize waste, are energy efficient, contain fewer toxic materials and often save money.
  - Work with local recyclers to determine what materials will contaminate your recycling program, and then purchase more recyclable products.
  - Invest in energy efficient equipment that is durable and easy to repair. Negotiate maintenance contracts to extend the life of your equipment. Sell or donate old equipment to others who can use it.
  - Look into purchasing remanufactured equipment, such as telephones. This provides a vital service in keeping bulky items out of landfills and corporate disposal costs down.
  - Many laser printers, copiers, and fax machines employ "disposable" cartridges. In truth, these cartridges can be "recharged" at half the cost of buying new cartridges. Reputable firms will offer you a full guarantee on the quality of the cartridge and assurance that the recharged cartridge will not harm your equipment.
  - Some typewriter ribbon cartridges and computer-printer ribbon cartridges also can be reloaded with new ribbons at significant savings.
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## Paper

- In general, at least 70 percent of a typical office's waste is paper. Businesses can save on supplies and expensive hauling costs by reducing much of this waste. In addition, filing space and mailing costs can be reduced.
- Double-sided copying can save up to 50 percent of the paper used for copying. When sending material to print shops, remember to specify double-sided printing.
- Establish an effective oversight and review process to catch errors before you print. Edit documents on the computer to reduce the need to print out extra drafts.
- Bind paper printed on one side only into pads of different sizes for use as notes, telephone message memos, and writing pads. Cardboard pad backing can be used again and again.
- Donate used paper to schools and child-care centers for art projects.
- Save and reuse interoffice envelopes, large manilla envelopes, file folders, and boxes.
- Maintain central files rather than filing papers in multiple files (this reduces the need to purchase additional filing cabinets, too.)
- Circulate memos rather than making multiple copies. Even better, make announcements through electronic mail, central bulletin or chalk boards, telephones, or staff meetings.
- Carefully evaluate quantities needed for reports and publications to avoid having to throw away extras later. Maintain your mailing lists to reduce duplications.
- Remove your name from mailing lists for materials you no longer wish to receive.

- Ask to be removed from "junk" mailing lists by obtaining a form at the post office that will remove your name from all third-class mailing lists. Or contact Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Assn., P.O. Box 9008, Farmington, NY, 11735-9008.
- The "Post-it" company makes small fax transmittal memos that can be affixed to the first page of documents transmitted by fax instead of using a separate cover sheet. This saves paper and time.
- Replace colored legal pads with white so they can be recycled for a higher price.
- To keep recycling markets strong, purchase new supplies made from recycled feedstock.

## P

- Use more energy efficient equipment, better employee training, incentive programs, and a quality-monitoring system to reduce waste and save raw materials.
- Train employees to keep clean manufacturing scrap separated by type and color so it can be salvaged and reused.
- Reuse industrial scrap for another purpose. For instance, a wallpaper manufacturer uses the reverse side of misprinted wallpaper for test runs.
- Extend the life of equipment through proper maintenance and consider remanufacturing worn down equipment.
- Hire a linen service to provide cloth rags for cleaning machinery, office equipment and furniture.
- Look into joining a "waste exchange" program with other businesses who may want your waste.

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- Use reusable distribution packaging instead of throwaway containers.
- Sturdy plastic crates are used to ship everything from soft drinks to car parts. Empty containers can be hauled back to suppliers.
- Order supplies in bulk to save on packaging. You'll also save on shipping costs and the price of the supplies.
- Encourage suppliers to send you products in less packaging or in reusable or more recyclable packaging.
- Ask suppliers to take back pallets or switch to more durable pallets that can be reused.
- Shred waste paper for use as packing material.

## Cafeteria

- Use reusable dishes and flatware for special events and daily use. The capital investment can be regained quickly in savings from disposables and in avoided disposal costs.
- Linen services are an affordable source of reusable tablecloths, napkins, and dishcloths.
- Offer corporate coffee mugs or water glasses to employees and visitors to use in place of disposable cups. Encourage your cafeteria to offer discounts to employees who bring their own cups.
- Dispense beverages from tanks or refillable bottles instead of individual packages.
- Order food supplies in bulk and economy-size packaging.