

Office Recycling

A Quick Guide to Starting an Office Recycling Program

Implementing a successful recycling program requires commitment and education. By following these simple steps you can offset some of the costs of your recycling program. We suggest you begin your program by recycling white office paper, then gradually expand to include all the recyclables your business generates, including cans, glass, plastic and mixed paper. Recent changes in Georgia's private sector recycling (single stream recycling) may make it easier than ever to start recycling now.

Step 1: Select a Recycling Coordinator and/or Committee

The person or people you choose should have good organizational and communication skills and enthusiasm for recycling. During the start-up phase of your program the coordinator will need a reasonable amount of time to make sure all the necessary parts of the program are in place. Once the system is in place, it should require only a few hours a month to monitor the program. If you select a committee, you should try to have members from all the various departments of your company to monitor the program and stay aware of any special needs or problems as they arise.

Step 2: Keep Track of What you Currently Throw Away

The easiest and most reliable way to track your trash is to have a trash flow evaluation done by a recycling service, consultant, or your current trash service (see Step 3 below for selecting a service.) They will review what you currently throw away and determine what is recoverable. They will also be able to help you determine the best way to remove, and identify where to take, your recyclables. There is often a fee for this type of evaluation, but many recycling businesses will waive this fee if you select them as your recycling vendor. Another option for evaluating what you throw away is to develop a recycling worksheet and monitor your own trash disposal habits. This will help you determine the type of recycling you should be doing and the recycling system that will be necessary to handle it.

Step 3: Choose a Hauler

Most large communities have recycling services available. A good place to start looking is by checking with your current trash service provider, contacting your city or county solid waste department, or by contacting other businesses in your area that are recycling and ask them for a referral. You should also check the telephone directories under Waste Paper or Recycling for other options. Local Keep America Beautiful affiliates are a great resource, as is Earth's 911 (www.earth911.org)

Step 4: Choose Containers to set up your recycling system

Your collection system will require various products and equipment ranging from personal recycling collection containers to be used at an individual's desk to large mobile collection containers to pick up and transport your recyclables to your dock or drop-off area. Most office supply stores carry simple recycling containers marked with the chasing arrows symbol, and there are many online sources for containers. Your recycling service provider will also be able to help you identify the most appropriate container system for your program.

Step 5: Educate and Inform Employees

Education of employees is key to the success of any office recycling program. Most people are excited about taking part in the program and are very receptive to learning about it. Try a three-step approach:

1. Build Awareness. Let people know about the goals and benefits of the program
2. Conduct employee meetings to discuss the recycling process. Tell people what is recyclable and what is not, and how they can participate in the program.
3. Follow up on the program. Keep people aware of the progress of the program through meetings, memos and newsletters.

Step 6: Review Your Recycling Program

Review your program every three to six months and compare results to the disposal evaluation you performed before starting your program (Step 2.) If your program is not meeting your expectations, look at your system and see where you can make changes to make your program more successful, such as increasing educational efforts, moving recycling containers or expanding the program to include more materials.

Step 7: Promote Ideas for Reusing Materials and Reducing Waste

There are many ways you can reduce the amount of waste materials generated in your office. Have paper that's been used on one side cut up and made into note pads; reuse old envelopes as file folders; and use ceramic coffee mugs instead of Styrofoam cups. The possibilities are endless.

As you monitor your program, remember that recycling is only part of the cycle. Complete the loop by buying products made with recycled content.



For more information, contact the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Office of Environmental Management at 404-679-4940, or online at www.dca.ga.gov