



Recycle MORE Minnesota

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Starting a Recycling Program at Your Business? Here's What You Need to Know...

Source: <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserve/onthego/program/index.htm>

Are you interested in Recycling MORE, cutting costs, and making your business more efficient? One business in Minnesota was able to cut its waste collection costs in half by participating in a recycling program with local organizations. By thinking outside the box your business can become more profitable in today's competitive markets. Read on to learn the steps to take when starting a recycling program at your business.

Step 1: Select a Recycling Coordinator

Select a recycling coordinator to oversee the entire operation. This individual is responsible for designing the collection program, selecting a hauler or arranging in-house transportation of materials, facilitating education and outreach, and tracking progress. In addition, the recycling coordinator will address questions and concerns from venue managers, concessionaires, staff and the public.

Step 2: Determine the Waste Stream

Determine which materials are going to be recycled. [Conduct a waste assessment](#) to figure out what is currently being thrown away and identify how much of each material is tossed.

Many businesses in Minnesota will generate predominantly bottles and cans, although some transportation venues will generate mainly newspapers. Many venues will also generate a large amount of cardboard from concessionaires' packaging. Keeping this in mind, you might not need to conduct a formal waste assessment at all venues. [Consider donating surplus food \(PDF\)](#) or [composting food waste](#) if feasible, when developing your recycling program.

Since recyclables are marketed by weight, you'll need to estimate this for each material you plan to recycle. But before attempting to weigh a dumpster full of newspapers on a scale, use this shortcut. Calculate the volume for each major component of your recyclables as well as its percentage of total recyclables. Using this data, the [volume-to-weight conversion chart \(PDF\)](#) will help you best estimate the amount of each material your venue will generate.

Information you obtain from a waste assessment or the volume-to-weight conversion chart will help you to determine which recyclables to collect. For example, if 45 percent of the waste stream is aluminum but only 1 percent is paper, you will likely want to focus on collecting aluminum—although, if efficient, paper might be worth adding. This assessment also will provide baseline data so you can calculate your recycling rate (the amount of materials recycled compared to the total amount of waste generated) and chart program success down the road.

Some of the materials that you should consider including:

- Aluminum
- Plastics
- Glass
- Food Scraps
- Corrugated cardboard
- Old newspaper

Prices for recyclables, like all commodities, fluctuate with supply and demand. If you want to recycle a material but are having trouble finding a market where you live, please refer to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's database of recycling markets <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/oea/market/markets/index.cfm>. The Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) or your local chamber of commerce might also be able to help you find or develop new markets for materials you intend to collect.

Step 3: Practice Waste Prevention

Waste prevention means using less material to get a job done—and ending up with less waste to manage. In addition to environmental benefits, waste prevention saves money. Take a good look at your recycling collection data to see ways to reduce waste first. The most common forms of waste prevention are reducing, reusing and donating.

Reduce

Modify current purchasing practices to reduce the amount of waste generated. For example:

- Set printers and photocopiers to default duplexing and make training manuals and personnel information available electronically to reduce the amount of office paper used.
- Purchase products that use less or no packaging materials.
- Purchase products made with recycled-content materials.
- Purchase products in bulk.
- Use reusable containers when transporting or storing items for your business.

To learn how to further reduce waste, go to www.reduce.org.

Reuse

Reusing products and packaging prolongs their useful lives, delaying final disposal or

recycling. Reuse is the repair, refurbishing, washing or recovery of worn or used products, appliances, furniture and building materials. You can, for example:

- Reuse corrugated moving boxes internally.
- Reuse office furniture and supplies, such as interoffice envelopes and file folders.
- Use durable rather than disposable towels, tablecloths, napkins, dishes, cups and glasses.
- Use incoming packaging materials for outgoing shipments.

Donate

Prevent waste by donating products or materials to charities or nonprofits. For example:

- Donate unwanted supplies to local schools or nonprofit organizations.
- Donate food scraps for use as animal feed.
- Donate surplus food to local food banks.
- Advertise surplus and reusable items through a commercial materials exchange.
- Donate excess building materials to local low-income housing developers.

Step 4: Include Concessionaires, Staff and Volunteers

You've researched the options and have developed your recycling program. Who at the venue knows about the program? Support from concessionaires, venue staff and volunteers is essential when it comes to achieving a positive outcome. These groups are the program's support system—they must be onboard and willing to work to make the program successful.

[Visit the Volunteers page](#) and the [Concessionaires & Vendors](#) page to gather ideas about how to include them.

Step 5: Select a Contractor/Hauler

The first step in transporting recyclables from your program site to a recycler is to decide if you will contract out or haul recyclables using in-house staff.

If your venue chooses to contract with a hauler rather than haul recyclables directly, ask your current trash hauler if it also offers recycling pickup. Economically, this may be your best option. If your trash hauler does not provide recycling services, contact local recycling companies—they should be listed in your phone book.

Your venue also can consider using a resource management (RM) contract with haulers. Unlike traditional solid waste service contracts, RM compensates waste contractors based on achieving your organization's waste reduction goals rather than on the volume of waste disposed of. As a result, RM aligns contractor incentives with your recycling goals and encourages innovative approaches that foster cost-effective resource efficiency through waste prevention and recycling. [Visit EPA's WasteWise Web site](#) to learn more about resource management contracts.

A few businesses in Minnesota, typically smaller-scale or one-time special events, haul their own waste. In this case, train staff to collect and transport recyclables, too. Contact your local recycling center for more information and to find local drop-off sites. Because some contractors only accept single stream or multi-stream recycling collection, you need to select a collection method before choosing a contractor.

- Single stream collection uses one bin to collect all of the various types of recyclables.
- Multi-stream collection separates the various recyclables into different bins. This often is called source separating. Some materials cannot be collected together, such as food waste and plastics. Plastics, aluminum and glass, on the other hand, are frequently collected together.

Some questions to ask when picking a service provider:

- What materials do you collect?
- Do you provide single stream (all together) or multi-stream (separate) collection?
- Do you charge for collection?
- Do you pay for recyclables? How do you calculate their value?
- Do you offer a package deal that includes both waste and recyclables pickup?
- Will there be a lower price for refuse pickup if I use your recycling services?
- Do you provide collection containers?
- What is the pickup schedule? Do you pick up on call?
- Is there a minimum or maximum weight that you will pick up?
- What is the allowable amount of contamination?
- What are your reporting and accounting procedures?
- Could you provide client references?
- How long have you been in business?

Step 6: Set Up the Collection Program

Making recycling easy and convenient will greatly boost levels of public and vendor participation. This is key: make recycling easy.

Layout

Collection bins should be placed where they are most convenient and close to where the recyclables are generated, such as near picnic areas in parks and near vendors in stadiums. Ideally, place collection bins next to each trash can. Make sure that it's just as easy for people to recycle as it is to throw something away.

Collection Bins and Liners

To avoid confusion, the recycling bins should look different from trash cans and be easy to identify. Lids with round holes on recycling bins for bottles and cans will reduce contamination, which is when a foreign material (like a half-eaten pizza slice) is mixed into the recycling bin,

making the recyclable material impure and difficult to recycle. Make sure to clearly label both the recycling bins and trash bins using words and pictures.

If your community has a curbside recycling collection program, try coordinating the color of the venue's bins with the color of the curbside bins. Patrons will likely associate the bin color with recycling, which can boost your participation rates.

Bins are usually made from steel, corrugated cardboard or plastic. Try to purchase collection bins made of post-consumer recycled materials to close the recycling loop.

When selecting bins to use at your venue, consider:

- Cost
- Durability
- Capacity
- Ease of handling
- Amount of recycled-content materials

You also will need appropriate plastic liners (bags) for the bins. Remember that as the bins are emptied, they will need new liners to collect more recyclables. If a single stream collection system is being used, consider using clear bags so the contents can be easily identified once filled. When purchasing liners make sure they are made of recycled content.

Storage and Pickup

Once the materials have been removed from the collection bins, they need to be stored on-site until picked up by a hauler or delivered to a recycling drop-off site; in greater Minnesota there is usually at least one in every county.

- Will the materials be stored on-site in a shed or a dumpster?
- Will the hauler provide a compactor as part of its contract?
- If not, is it feasible to invest in a compactor, which will decrease the number of pickups needed for the collected recyclables?

Consider the size of the venue and available storage space when determining how frequently the recyclables must be hauled. Remember to take into account seasonal fluctuations in the quantity of recyclables generated (e.g., holidays, baseball season, summer vacations). Regularly monitor how full the recycling dumpster is when it is emptied. If it is only half full, save money by reducing the number of times the hauler collects the materials.

Step 7: Facilitate Outreach and Education

Education is the best way to encourage the public and concessionaires to recycle. Use signs, displays, loudspeaker announcements, and/or text to teach them:

- **WHY** they should recycle.

- **WHAT** they should recycle.
- **WHERE** they can recycle.
- **HOW** they can recycle.

Include signage and/or literature at the site showing how much has been recycled already or goals that you are trying to reach. This will stimulate participation.

Likewise, use signs to clearly indicate recycling bin locations and instructions. Also see our Benefits of Recycling Fact Sheet to help educate staff.

Step 8: Monitor and Evaluate the Recycling Program

Use your baseline data collected before the program to evaluate progress. Determine the recycling rate by using the following formula:

Recycling rate =
 Total recycled (by weight)
 divided by total discarded (by weight) + recycled (by weight)

Determine the recycling rate for all of your recyclables combined and for each material independently. Track your progress over time as the recycling rate increases.

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