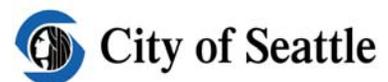


# Recycling at Work

## 6 Steps to Increased Participation in Your Recycling Program





This guide was prepared by the Resource Venture in September 2004. The Resource Venture is a program of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Seattle Public Utilities.

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## Seattle's New Recycling Regulations

Seattle spends more than \$26 million every year to send 920 million pounds of garbage to a landfill, where it will sit for thousands of years. About 25% of that garbage is made up of paper, cardboard, aluminum cans, plastic bottles and yard debris that could have been recycled or composted.



Why waste a good thing? That's what Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels and City Council members asked when they passed an ordinance that aims to save residents and businesses as much as \$2 million a year and keep future garbage costs low. Ordinance 121372 bans certain materials from the garbage and requires they be recycled instead. It is also the first in a series of steps and programs designed to increase Seattle's recycling rate, conserve resources and lower the cost of doing business.

Beginning January 1, 2005, City of Seattle Ordinance 121372 prohibits:

- Businesses from disposing of paper, cardboard or yard debris in the garbage.  
Exception: food-soiled or otherwise contaminated paper and cardboard.
- Residents (both single-family and multi-family) from putting paper, cardboard, glass and plastic bottles and jars as well as aluminum and tin cans in their garbage containers.  
Exception: food-soiled or otherwise contaminated paper and cardboard.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why is the City of Seattle now requiring recycling?

This approach was adopted when – after 15 years of voluntary recycling and educational programs – it was clear that the City of Seattle would not reach its recycling goal of 60%. The business community's decreasing recycling rate is seen as one reason for the City's failure to reach its goal. Consequently, recyclable paper and cardboard (a large portion of the disposed commercial waste stream) and yard debris (prohibited from residential garbage since 1989) were targeted.

### How will the City enforce this ordinance with businesses?

1. Education in 2004: Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) began a promotional campaign regarding the new recycling requirements and the availability of free recycling assistance in March 2004.
2. Tagging in 2005: A commercial customer whose garbage containers are found – by random inspection – to contain significant amounts of recyclable materials will receive educational notices on their containers or by mail.
3. Enforcement in 2006: Beginning January 1, 2006, a commercial customer with significant amounts of recyclables in their garbage will receive two warning notices before being issued a \$50 fine.

### What is considered “significant amounts of recyclable materials?”

“Significant amounts of recyclables” means a commercial garbage container or self-haul vehicle's load that contains more than 10% recyclables by volume (specifically paper, cardboard and yard debris – either alone or in combination) based on a visual inspection by a SPU inspector, contractor or transfer station worker.

### Will our janitorial service have to go through the garbage and pull out recyclables?

The City is not expecting janitors or housekeeping staffs to pull out paper and cardboard that tenants, employees and/or guests (e.g., hotels) throw away. The City, however, does expect businesses to provide tenants, employees and/or guests with recycling containers, and to give them instructions on the means of recycling. Such notice should include mention that recycling is a City requirement.

Additionally, the City may not hold a business responsible if the public throws paper and cardboard into their street-side, non-locking garbage containers, assuming certain conditions outlined in the ordinance are met.

### What if we don't have space outside for a recycling container?

Commercial customers may be exempt if a SPU inspection determines that there is not adequate space for recycling on site and no opportunity exists for sharing recycling containers with neighboring businesses or apartments. The inspection must be requested by the customer.

### Will having a recycling collection service cost us more money?

- Recycling generally reduces a business' total disposal costs. The savings in lower garbage bills normally covers any fee you may pay for recycling collection. Here's the key: When you keep recyclable materials out of the garbage, your waste container will be less full. Don't pay to have empty space hauled away. Rather, ask your garbage hauler to reduce the size of your container and/or pick it up less frequently.
- Not all recyclers charge a fee for recycling. Generally, if a business or building generates a large quantity of materials that the recycler can resell at a good price, then the recycling company will pick up the materials for free. In these cases, you may also get a rebate for the value of these materials. Keep in mind, however, that recyclable materials are commodities and, as a result, their value fluctuates.
- Commodities that some recyclers will purchase are white office paper and cardboard. If your building generates large quantities of these materials, call a variety of recyclers to find out which one will give you the best price for your materials.



### **In a multi-tenant building, who will be held responsible for paper, cardboard or yard debris in the garbage?**

The subscriber of the garbage account is responsible. If the **building owner** pays the garbage bill and provides solid waste services for all of the building tenants, then he/she is the garbage subscriber. If the building owner contracts with a **property management company** and that property manager pays the garbage bill and provides solid waste services for all of the building tenants, then the property management company is the garbage subscriber. If an individual **tenant**, like a restaurant, sets up its own, independent garbage account, then the tenant is the garbage subscriber.



### **Generally, your business or building is complying with the ordinance if you:**

- 1) Provide all tenants, employees and/or guests with recycling containers for recyclable paper and cardboard.
- 2) Instruct them to recycle paper and cardboard and let them know that it is a City requirement.
- 3) Compost yard debris by either having it hauled away for composting or by composting it on site.
- 4) Maintain 10% or less (by volume, alone or in combination) recyclable paper, cardboard and yard debris in your garbage containers or self-haul loads taken to the City's Recycling and Disposal Stations.

To read the **SPU Administrative Rule**, which outlines the details of Ordinance 121372, visit [www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/rec-ord/index.php](http://www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/rec-ord/index.php) or contact the Resource Venture at **(206) 389-7304** or [help@resourceventure.org](mailto:help@resourceventure.org).

### **What happens to the materials we recycle?**

Your recycled paper, cardboard, plastic and glass bottles and aluminum and tin cans are processed, bundled and sold to manufacturing plants around the Northwest and all over the world. For example, recycled paper and cardboard are turned into everyday items like boxes, tissue paper and newspaper. Additionally, recycled plastic bottles are made into many products, including t-shirts, fleece clothing, polyester carpet, toys and, of course, new bottles. Lastly, aluminum cans are used to make cars, appliances and new cans. In fact, manufacturers can make a new can out of a recycled aluminum can in as few as 90 days!

## 6 Steps to Increase Participation in Your Recycling Program

### **STEP 1: Select a Recycling Coordinator**

An effective business recycling program needs an enthusiastic coordinator with organizational experience and good communication skills. If your recycling program does not have a coordinator, then select a staff member who is interested in recycling, has good staff rapport and understands recycling and City of Seattle recycling requirements to re-evaluate your recycling program.

### **STEP 2: Gain Management Support**

Even though you already have a recycling program, continued support from upper management is crucial if your program is to succeed. Commercial recycling of paper, cardboard and yard debris will be mandatory as of January 1, 2005, and it's important for everyone to know that upper management is serious about complying with Seattle's new ordinance.

### **STEP 3: Determine What Else to Recycle**

If you're already recycling paper, cardboard and yard debris, why not expand your program to include other materials like aluminum cans, plastic bottles, scrap metal, batteries, fluorescent tubes or food waste?

### **STEP 4: Evaluate Your Collection System**

A simple and convenient collection system will result in greater employee participation. Make sure all recycling containers are well-marked and placed at every desk and in common work areas (where large quantities of material are generated). This will enable you to collect the greatest volume of recyclables.

### **STEP 5: Educate Your Staff**

If your employees don't know which materials are recyclable or where to recycle them, they will likely toss them in the garbage. Education is an important part of every successful recycling program because well-informed employees will actively participate. Don't forget to train new employees about your company's recycling and waste prevention programs.

### **STEP 6: Promote Your Program**

Don't stop once you've trained employees. Reinforce the recycling habit in your company. Use your employee newsletter or send out emails with information about how the program is doing. Let staff know what volumes they are recycling and address any problems.



## Increasing Participation in Your Recycling Program

Now that you are familiar with the six steps, each will be discussed in more detail.

### STEP 1: Select a Recycling Coordinator

An effective business recycling program needs an enthusiastic coordinator with organizational experience and good communication skills. If your recycling program does not have a coordinator, then select a staff member who is interested in recycling, has good staff rapport and understands recycling and City of Seattle recycling requirements to re-evaluate your recycling program.

The coordinator is responsible for:

- Getting more recycling containers (if needed), distributing them to employees and placing them next to shared copiers and printers, in the staff lounge and conference rooms.
- Creating a promotion and education campaign and answering questions.
- Working with department supervisors to help them encourage employee participation.
- Tracking and reporting on the progress of the program.
- Acting as liaison with the recycling company and the janitorial staff.

An alternative approach, especially if this seems like too much work for one person, is to organize a company-wide or building-wide Green Team. A Green Team is a group of employees or tenants that are responsible for planning, setting up and maintaining the building's waste prevention and recycling programs.

The Team should represent a cross-section of the employees or tenants of the facility. In multi-tenant situations, this might mean a representative of each company in the building; in large institutions, this might be a representative from each department. Whatever the makeup, it is essential for you to recognize that an integrated approach to planning will assure a successful program.



### STEP 2: Gain Management Support

In the long term, support from upper management and your co-workers is key. After all, you can't do it alone; you need the participation of all employees to make your program work.

- Have your company's president email a support-building memo to staff stating the importance of recycling to your company and requiring them to participate. The email should note that recycling of paper, cardboard and yard debris is now a City of Seattle requirement.
- Recruit volunteers from various departments for a "Green Team."

### STEP 3: Determine What Else to Recycle

If you're already recycling paper, cardboard and yard debris, why not expand your program to include other materials like aluminum cans, plastic bottles, scrap metal, batteries, fluorescent tubes or food waste?



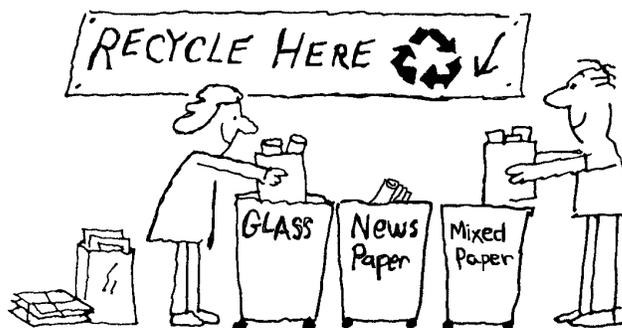
First, check with your recycling hauler to see if they recycle any materials you may not know about. Then, visit the Resource Venture's online Recycling Database, located at [www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/find-a-recycler/index.php](http://www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/find-a-recycler/index.php), to see if there are materials you're throwing away that could be recycled. The database lists recycling options for more than 200 different materials, like scrap metal, computers, cell phones, toner cartridges, office furniture, pallets and more. If you're not sure what your company is throwing out, then take a quick peek in your garbage dumpster.

### STEP 4: Evaluate Your Collection System

A simple and convenient collection system will result in greater employee participation. Make sure all recycling containers are well-marked and placed at every desk and in common work areas (where large quantities of material are generated). This will enable you to collect the greatest volume of recyclables.

Below are some tips for improving your collection system:

- Place garbage cans and recycling containers *next to each other*. Take a tour of your company's staff lounge, conference rooms, mail room, shared copiers and printers and workstations. If you find that recycling containers and garbage cans are not next to each other—move them.
- Post a recycling label on each container that lists which materials can and cannot be recycled. Free recycling container labels may be obtained by calling your recycling hauler, by calling the Resource Venture at (206) 389-7304 or by downloading labels from the Resource Venture's Web site at [www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/rec-ord/index.php](http://www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/rec-ord/index.php). See **Appendix A** for a sample Resource Venture container label.



## STEP 5: Educate Your Staff

If your employees don't know which materials are recyclable or where to recycle them, they will likely toss them in the garbage. Education is an important part of every successful recycling program because well-informed employees will actively participate. Don't forget to train new employees about your company's recycling and waste prevention programs.

### Training Sessions

Face-to-face communication is the best way to educate employees. A 15-minute recycling education session at a staff meeting is more effective than an email, resulting in less confusion and greater participation.

- Schedule training sessions for management and employees so that everyone understands what materials are recyclable and where the containers are located.
- Let them know they are expected to use resources carefully and participate in the office's waste reduction programs.
- Check out the Resource Venture's Waste Prevention & Recycling Publications Web page for information you may want to hand out at the training session. ([www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/publications/index.php](http://www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/publications/index.php))
- Distribute a recycling container label to each employee and tell them to place it on their deskside recycling container.
- Include ways that staff can prevent waste and reuse supplies at work. Read the **Preventing Waste in the First Place** section on pages 9 and 10 for ideas.
- Make sure staff know who to contact with questions.

### New Employee Orientation

Have new employees spend 15-minutes with the recycling coordinator or a Green Team member to learn how and where to recycle and reuse materials in the office. Give them a list of recyclable materials and answer any questions they may have.



## STEP 6: Promote Your Program

Don't stop once you've trained employees. Reinforce the recycling habit in your company. Use your employee newsletter or send out emails with information about how the program is doing. Let staff know what volumes they are recycling and address any problems.

Below are some ideas to keep them interested and motivated.

- ❑ Send out an email once a month educating staff about different aspects of resource conservation and pollution prevention. Use these reminders to encourage staff to recycle when they purge files, for example. The Resource Venture's Employee Education & Training Web page located at [www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/get-started/education/index.php](http://www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/get-started/education/index.php) has links to several Web sites where you can copy and paste tips and facts.
- ❑ If your company has an employee newsletter or intranet, talk to the publisher about adding a "recycling" or "conservation" column.
- ❑ Post a conservation fact sheet in the bathroom. This is an effective way to educate your co-workers about all kinds of resource conservation and pollution prevention issues. Insert a one-page educational fact sheet into a plastic sleeve and tape it inside bathroom stall doors and above urinals at eye level. Work with other interested employees to change the fact sheet monthly. If you don't have time to create your own bathroom stall fact sheet, download and print the Resource Venture's at [www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/get-started/education/index.php](http://www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/get-started/education/index.php).
- ❑ Include recycling on staff meeting agendas to clear up problems and keep the program visible.
- ❑ Give awards to those who do a particularly conscientious job of keeping the recycling program neat and tidy, recycle large amounts of material or propose waste prevention ideas that save money.
- ❑ Sign up for the Resource Venture's Email Updates and semi-annual newsletter, *Solutions*, at [www.resourceventure.org](http://www.resourceventure.org). Resource Venture Email Updates are designed to provide Seattle businesses with useful, timely information on local resource conservation and pollution prevention topics in between issues of our newsletter. You can use these tips in reminder emails or in your own company newsletter.
- ❑ Keep your employees motivated by promoting the amount of materials recycled and/or the amount of money saved through the waste prevention and recycling programs. Once they see that their efforts really make a difference, they'll be more inclined to participate and encourage others to do the same.

The Resource Venture is committed to helping Seattle businesses prevent waste and recycle. If you need additional assistance, contact us at **(206) 389-7304** or [help@resourceventure.org](mailto:help@resourceventure.org) or visit our Web site at [www.resourceventure.org](http://www.resourceventure.org).

## Preventing Waste in the First Place

Now that you have set up your recycling program, you may want to look around your office or facility and see how you can prevent waste in the first place. Waste prevention is even more beneficial than recycling. Activities such as reuse not only reduce collection costs, but also cut down on supply expenses. Here are some suggestions you can put into practice.

### General Waste Prevention Strategies

- Order supplies, trade publications and marketing materials more precisely.
- Designate a book shelf as a “reuse station” where employees can leave and take unwanted office supplies and other materials.
- Donate used or discarded goods and equipment that you no longer need.
- Negotiate with suppliers to provide goods in returnable, reusable or recyclable packaging. Ask your suppliers not to over package orders.
- Reuse foam-packing peanuts from incoming shipments for outgoing mailings. Or, return them to a packaging store in your neighborhood. 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 lunchroom and cloth hand towels in the restrooms.
- Advertise surplus and reusable items through a free listing service like the Industrial Materials Exchange (IMEX), Reusable Building Materials Exchange (RBME), the Share House or Freecycle. You can find links to these exchange programs at [www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/other-resources/index.php](http://www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/other-resources/index.php).



### Ideas for Preventing Waste in the Office

- Give each employee instructions on how to print on both sides of the paper. Download the Resource Venture's sample instructions at [www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/get-started/education/index.php](http://www.resourceventure.org/rv/issues/waste/get-started/education/index.php). Modify the instructions to work with your software and printer, if necessary.
- Post a list of paper-saving copy ideas at every copier. Download *The Paper-Smart Office: Tips to Work By* at the Web site listed above.
  - Reuse single-sided paper for drafts and note pads. Establish a draft paper tray near laser printers and copy machines so that single-sided sheets can be reused.
  - Before running a large number of copies, do a one-page test of copier settings. Remember to clear features when finished.
  - Avoid making extra copies. Make extras later if you need them.
  - Revise forms to reduce form length and eliminate unnecessary duplicates.
  - Create a central filing system instead of maintaining duplicate personal files.
  - Proof documents on the computer screen before printing.



- 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.
- Use outdated letterhead for in-house memos, documents and drafts.
- Keep your mailing list up-to-date by requesting corrections and offering the recipient the option of being removed.
- Join the EcoLogical Mail Coalition and stop receiving unwanted mail sent to former employees. Visit [www.ecologicalmail.org](http://www.ecologicalmail.org).
- Purchase remanufactured office equipment.
- Purchase computer printers that do not discharge unused sheets of paper, or make adjustments in existing hardware and software.
- Purchase rechargeable batteries for all business applications.
- Use remanufactured copier, printer and fax toner cartridges.



### Purchasing Practices

- Establish purchasing guidelines to encourage waste prevention (e.g., durable, concentrated, reusable and/or high-quality products).
- Consider length of warranty and availability of repair services when purchasing equipment.
- Substitute less-toxic materials for toxic materials (e.g., vegetable-based inks, water-based glue, markers and paints).
- Replace cardboard boxes and interoffice envelopes with a durable counterpart for shipping to branch offices, stores and warehouses.
- Return, reuse and repair wooden pallets and crates.

### Management Involvement

- Promote paper reduction in your company. Build awareness with contests and signs. Publicize implementation of ideas and their 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.



**Appendix A****RECYCLE  
MIXED PAPER****YES**

- **Cardboard**
- **Envelopes** (including window envelopes)
- **File Folders**
- **Glossy Paper** (magazines, catalogs)
- **Mail**
- **Newspaper**
- **Paper: White, Brown, Colored**
- **Paper Bags** (no food contamination)
- **Post-It Notes**
- **Telephone books**

**NO**

- **Candy Wrappers**
- **Foam Core**
- **Food Waste**
- **Paper Cups & Plates**
- **Paper Towels & Napkins**
- **Ream Wrappers** (with plastic coating inside)
- **Self-Stick Labels & Plastic Backing**
- **Spiral Notebooks**

Staples and paper clips are acceptable.



The Resource Venture provides free environmental consulting services to Seattle-area businesses. We help companies lower their utility costs, obtain rebates, comply with regulations and receive public recognition, all while protecting the environment. Since 1990, the Resource Venture has helped thousands of businesses recycle, use less water, prevent stormwater pollution and build sustainably. We are a program of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Seattle Public Utilities.

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