

Waste disposal is one of many costs of doing business. The best way to lower waste related costs is to reduce the amount of waste your business generates. Recycling is a good option for wastes that cannot be reduced or reused in any way. While there are expenses associated with recycling, you may realize cost savings if your recycling efforts allow you to cut back on the number of your trash dumpsters or the frequency of trash collections.

Many businesses are finding that waste reduction and recycling save money as well as benefit the environment. Solid Waste Services staff are available to visit your site and help you evaluate your waste issues. The following steps may also help you get started.

Obtain Management Support

Management approval and support are essential for the success of a waste reduction program. Present management with waste reduction and recycling ideas. Management needs to support a waste reduction policy and program from the beginning and communicate to employees their ongoing commitment.

Form a Team

Waste reduction programs are most successful when an enthusiastic team leads the program. This team will be the nucleus for program planning, implementation, and education. Depending on the size of your business, select volunteers from a cross-section of the organization. Be sure to include a representative from facilities, maintenance and purchasing. These employees will be directly affected by the program and should help with its design. If your company is too small for a team, select one or two leaders who are committed to waste reduction. The team or volunteer leader (in the case of a small company) manages the program and acts as a liaison with management, employees, maintenance staff and the recycling vendor representative.

Getting Started

The waste reduction team needs to meet and discuss their expectations. They should develop goals, objectives and a mission statement. Once they have identified these three things, the next steps will be determining what's in their waste stream, developing a plan of action, and deciding how to communicate with the other employees.

Evaluate Your Waste Stream

Before you can begin to recycle or reduce the amount of waste you generate, you need to know what you are throwing away. A waste stream evaluation identifies the composition, quantity and percentage of materials in your waste stream.

Waste evaluations can be as simple as looking in employee garbage cans or in the building dumpster. The more time spent evaluating the waste, the more you will know about what materials may be targeted for reduction and recycling.



For more information call 974-9727, or visit www.austinrecycles.com

WASTE REDUCTION TIP SHEET • How to Start a Business Waste Reduction Program

Develop a Plan

Once you have analyzed your waste, you need to develop a plan. And then you have to consider the options for your materials. What can be recycled? What items can be reused? Are there alternative products that are repairable or more durable? Will purchasing in bulk or concentrates reduce waste and cost? What products made from recyclable materials can be purchased? The team needs to involve management in this step as policies and purchasing methods may have to change. Also, ask staff for their suggestions. In addition to evaluating the options, the plan should set realistic goals and schedules.

Communication

Employee involvement is as important as management support and should be initiated early in the process. One of the objectives should be distributing information to other employees explaining how they will accomplish this objective. The team can decide the best way to motivate and educate other employees - newsletters, email, training sessions, posters, or contests. Education and training should be ongoing, as success will depend on staff participation. This is an area where management can step up and ensure that waste reduction training and education will become part of every employee's job.

Implement the Plan

Once the plan has been developed, implementation is next. Part of the planning process is deciding how to implement the plan, whether immediately or in phases. If it will be a big change, implement it gradually so employees are not overwhelmed by procedure changes. A pilot program might be necessary and will allow you to identify any operational problems. Employee education is important throughout the implementation stage.

Evaluate and Adjust

After the program has been operational for a while, the team should evaluate its effectiveness to determine if goals are being met. This evaluation can take place after the first full month of operation, or it can wait until after it's been operational for six months. It's important to keep active records and documentation so that you have the information you need to evaluate the effect of new products, different vendors and new systems. If you make changes to the program – remember to tell the employees.

Most importantly, keep the employees updated on the program's progress and success.



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