



# DEVELOPING A RECYCLING PROGRAM AT WORK

CITY OF HARRISBURG  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

## The Requirements

The Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act of 1988 (Act 101) requires commercial, institutional and municipal establishments located in Pennsylvania's mandated municipalities to recycle high-grade office paper, corrugated paper, aluminum and leaf waste. In addition, establishments must recycle any other materials included in the municipality's recycling ordinance or regulations, which may include glass, newsprint, plastics, and/or steel and bimetallic cans. As a mandated municipality, businesses and institutions with facilities located within the City of Harrisburg must implement recycling programs.

The City of Harrisburg's recycling requirements are as follows:

- All commercial, institutional and municipal establishments must source separate the following materials:
  - High grade office paper
  - Corrugated cardboard
  - Glass containers
  - Aluminum cans
  - Any other recyclables that may be designated by the City
- Those served by the City's curbside program must set their materials at the curb in the City's blue recycling bins for collection.
- Those not served by the City's curbside program must arrange for the collection and recycling of all designated materials.
- All commercial, institutional and municipal entities must provide written documentation as to the type and weight of materials recycled annually. Reports are due to the City by January 15 of each year on a form provided by the City.

## Designing Your Program

A well-designed recycling program requires careful planning and attention to detail. When you implement a program that has been well thought-out, it not only complies with the law, but it reduces waste, saves natural resources, and potentially, saves money for your business or institution. Source reduction and reuse—using less resources in addition to recycling—can further reduce waste.

Elements of a successful recycling program are as follows:

### 1. Obtaining Top-Level Management Support

Senior management support is essential to the success of your recycling program. Management's positive support promotes a similar attitude among employees and customers. Also, recycling programs often require initial outlays of capital. Management approval of a recycling budget ensures that resources are available when needed.



## Recycling Works

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## 2. Designating a Recycling Coordinator

Every business or institution should have a coordinator to manage its recycling program. The person selected should be genuinely interested in recycling and able to interface with personnel at all organization levels. To ensure that attention is given to the program, it is advisable to incorporate recycling responsibilities into the employee's overall job description.

## 3. Establishing a Recycling Task Force

If the facility is large enough and has a significant number of employees, a task force should be formed to help the coordinator plan and initiate the program. This group may remain in force as a permanent advisory body to ensure continued program development. To ensure that all parts of your operation are addressed fairly and adequately, task force representatives should be assigned from all departments that will be affected by your recycling program. It is also a good idea to include a spokesperson for employees.

## 4. Assessing the Waste Stream

The coordinator should assess the amount of recyclables in your organization's waste stream, and where they originate.

This process is known as a waste assessment. The waste assessment should focus on offices, cafeterias, lounges, restrooms, vending machine areas, boiler rooms, maintenance areas, storage areas, and other locations where trash originates. If the audit reveals that yard debris composes a large percentage of the waste stream, the task force should consider the feasibility of including on-site composting as part of the recycling program.



## 5. Markets for Recyclables

Your recycling program will generate materials that can be used to manufacture new products. The companies that do this are known as end users or end markets. One of the more significant tasks of the recycling coordinator is to determine how to get recyclables to these markets. Recyclables may be marketed directly to an end user if agreement can be reached on the amount, quality and regularity of the shipments. Otherwise, it will be necessary to negotiate with intermediaries -- such as waste haulers, processors or brokers -- to collect, process, and/or market recyclables. The coordinator should discuss recycling strategies with waste haulers, processors/brokers and end users to determine the preferred management option before adopting a final plan for the recycling program.

## 6. Internal Collection

Whether your organization is housed in one room, one building, or a number of buildings, it will be necessary to design a system for collecting recyclables. The main issue to consider in developing an internal collection system should be **convenience** for both system users and collection staff. Key considerations are as follows:

- **Containers.** Recycling container options range from reused corrugated boxes to a wide variety of commercially available trays and bins. Consider space availability, container placement, the quantity needed, size, shape, color, labels that identify the containers as recycling containers,

and educational materials that inform the employees and customers about acceptable materials and how to use the system. Consideration should be given to individual workstations and areas of high generation, such as copiers and lunchrooms. Check with your local fire marshal regarding fire code compliance.

- **Storage.** The central storage area should be clean, dry and free of fire hazards. Containers should be clearly labeled. If storage containers must be located outside, consider using covered storage bins to preserve material quality and prevent litter and contamination.
- **Collection Personnel.** Collecting recyclables from workstations and high generation areas and taking them to a central storage area is usually the responsibility of custodial staff. If recyclables must be delivered to a market, delivery personnel must be designated. A printed operations schedule is helpful to collection and delivery personnel.
- **Materials Preparation.** Many end users require special preparation of materials for efficient transportation and/or incorporation into their manufacturing processes. Preparation techniques include crushing, bundling and baling. Unless your facility generates very large volumes of material (e.g. a grocery store that generates large volumes of corrugated cardboard), you should probably work with a hauler, processor or broker to determine how they wish to receive materials to facilitate further processing for end users.



## 7. Education and Promotion

A comprehensive and sustained program is imperative to: (1) tell employees and customers about your recycling policies, procedures and goals; (2) encourage participation; (3) stress that recyclables must be kept clean, dry and free of contaminants that can diminish their market value or cause them to be rejected; and (4) publicize program successes to maintain ongoing participation. Channels to consider for conveying this information include staff meetings, orientation meetings for new employees, newsletters, flyers and posters.

## 8. Evaluation

The coordinator should monitor the program to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency. Sources of information include: (1) maintenance staff, for input regarding improper handling and contamination of materials; (2) accounting staff, regarding waste management costs; (3) employees and customers, for suggestions concerning convenience; (4) safety staff regarding possible storage violations; and (5) waste haulers, processors, brokers or end users, as appropriate, for information on the amount of waste generated and materials recycled, and the percentage of waste reduced through recycling.



## 9. Procurement Policies – Buying Recycled

Purchasing products that are made from or packaged in recycled materials create a demand for the materials generated by your recycling program. Greater demand for these materials usually means greater market price, which helps to reduce the cost to operate a recycling program. One way to achieve this is through revising bid specifications to give a preference for items containing post-consumer materials.

## For further information...

The following fact sheets are available from the City of Harrisburg's Department of Public Works:

- Recycling at Work: Information for Harrisburg Businesses & Institutions
- Conducting a Waste Assessment
- Recycling in Hospitals & Health Care Institutions
- Recycling in Office Buildings
- Recycling in Hotels & Motels
- Recycling in Manufacturing & Warehouse Operations
- Recycling in Retail Operations
- Recycling in Restaurants and Taverns
- Recycling in Schools, Colleges and Universities
- Helping to Solve Solid Waste Problems in Your Business or Institution
- Recycling in Apartments & Condominiums
- Recycling at Outdoor & Special Events

To obtain one or more of these fact sheets, contact:

City of Harrisburg  
Department of Public Works  
1690 S. 19<sup>th</sup> Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17104  
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For more detailed information about implementing a waste reduction and recycling program in your workplace:

Visit the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection website at [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us), click on the "Recycling Works" logo, and go to "Commercial Recycling."

The Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania (PROP) has published "Developing a Waste Reduction and Recycling Program for Commercial, Institutional, Industrial and Municipal Establishments." To obtain a copy, contact PROP at:

P.O. Box 25  
Bellwood, PA 16617  
(814) 742-7777  
Fax (814) 742-8838  
e-mail [prop@epix.net](mailto:prop@epix.net)  
[www.proprecycles.org](http://www.proprecycles.org)

