

Recycling and Waste Reduction at Work

Places of Worship

There are many opportunities for waste reduction and recycling in places of worship. The information in this fact sheet is designed to help staff, volunteers, and congregational officers understand the importance of recycling and waste reduction in their business, and to provide guidance on beginning a recycling and waste reduction program.



What are the Benefits to a Waste Reduction and Recycling Program?

Protects Our Resources. All of the environmental reasons that you've heard for recycling are still true. Recycling helps conserve natural resources, saves energy, reduces the need for landfills, decreases pollution caused by manufacturing products, and generally helps protect the environment for future generations.

Boosts Your Image. The public appreciates businesses and organizations that make an effort to be environmentally-friendly. This includes any place where they spend time, whether worshipping, volunteering, or working.

Decreases Costs. If you contract with a private hauler to empty your dumpsters and haul your garbage, you may be able to save money by implementing a recycling program. After all, the less trash you put in your dumpster, the less often it needs to be emptied.

How Do We Get Started?

- 1. Get Committed.** To be effective, a waste reduction and recycling program must have support from staff, clergy, and congregational officers. Demonstrate your support and commitment by ensuring that time and resources are available. Select a volunteer with good communication and organizational skills to be the "Recycling Coordinator" in charge of the program.
- 2. Know Your Waste.** Perform a waste assessment so that you can see how much you are throwing away. Examine the contents of dumpsters and trash cans and talk to janitorial staff about the materials that they see. Determine which materials make up the largest percentage of your waste stream, and which materials would be easiest to divert. You will probably see a lot of paper products, as well as some drink containers (plastic bottles and aluminum cans). Contact the Gaston County Solid Waste and Recycling Division at 704-922-7729 for more information or assistance with waste assessments.
- 3. Determine Your Collection Options.** There are two components to your collection program that you will need to consider – collection of materials inside the building and transport to the recycling facility.

Inside Collections: Which areas will participate in a recycling program – will you only recycle in the office area, or will you collect from classrooms and the worship hall? Do you have janitorial staff that will collect and consolidate materials, or will staff members or volunteers be responsible for collecting recyclables inside the building? You will need to look at the areas generating the materials that you want to recycle, and decide on the best way to collect and consolidate the materials that are coming out of the building.

Transportation: Once materials are collected from inside the building, you will need to decide how to transport them to a recycling facility. Are you willing to take your recyclables to a recycling center, or would you prefer to have someone pick them up for

you? If you want to have your recycling picked up, check with your current waste hauler to find out if you can add recyclable hauling to your current service contract. If you cannot do so, or if it will be cost-prohibitive, check with local recycling companies to see if one of them can meet your needs. If you are willing to transport your materials yourself, there are six Gaston County recycling centers located around the County. These sites accept plastic bottles, aluminum cans, glass bottles, steel food cans, mixed paper, newspaper, and cardboard.

4. **Set Goals.** Are you trying to reduce waste or costs by a certain amount, or do you simply want your members to be part of an environmentally-friendly organization? How will you determine whether or not your program is a success? Are you planning to track the amount of material recycled, your cost savings, or the environmental impacts of your program? Have a clear idea of the information that you want or need to track. That way, when you implement your program, you can be sure of getting the information that you need.
5. **Develop a Plan and Educate Your Employees.** Once you have decided which recycling options will work best for you, develop those ideas into a recycling plan. Make sure that everyone involved is on the same page. Let volunteers, staff, and clergy know where recycling bins will be located, and what materials are acceptable in the bins. Anyone that will be collecting and/or sorting materials needs to know how the materials should be separated, how materials will be transported to the recycling company, and where and how materials will be stored. Remember that education is an on-going process, and you will continually need to remind everyone about container locations and acceptable materials. If you have a large enough staff (volunteer or permanent), you might want to provide periodic education sessions for employees, just to keep them up-to-date on the program.
6. **Implement Your Program.** Place your containers and begin recycling. Just remember that your recycling program is a work in progress, and you may end up having to change collection methods or procedures. Make sure that you take the time to evaluate your recycling program and gauge whether or not you are meeting your goals. You can also look for ways to make the program more efficient. To make things as easy as possible make sure that you continue to provide educational materials to everyone that can participate in the program. Post signs in recycling areas and make sure that bins are properly labeled. If the program will be available to parishioners, put information in church bulletins or other updates that are sent to all members.

Overcoming the Barriers to Recycling

Since most worship facilities are non-profit organizations, there is not a lot of extra money to implement programs with up-front costs. To decrease your costs, consider the following:

- Look for companies that will accept multiple materials for recycling. For example, some paper recycling companies will also accept plastic bottles or aluminum cans.
- Check with nearby businesses to see if they already have recycling programs in place. If so, will they let you piggy-back on their program by using their recycling bins?
- If aesthetics are not important, you don't have to purchase recycling bins – ask your congregation members to bring in empty cardboard boxes, plastic buckets, or other containers to be used as recycling containers.
- Use the County recycling centers. If you have small amounts of several different materials, the drop-off centers may be the most efficient way to recycle.



Legal Requirements

North Carolina General Statute 130A-309.10(f):

Bans certain items from being disposed of in landfills. Under this statute, aluminum cans, used motor oil, antifreeze, whole scrap tires lead-acid batteries, white goods (large appliances like washers and dryers), and yard debris are all banned from landfill disposal under this law.

House Bill 1465: This bill expands on G.S. 130A-309.10(f) to ban additional materials from disposal in landfills. Under this bill, plastic bottles will be banned, along with oil filters and wooden pallets. House Bill 1465 becomes effective October 1, 2009. The full text of this bill is available online at <http://www.p2pays.org/ref/38/37333.pdf>.

Where Can I Find Out More?

More and more religions are taking part in the environmental movement. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment is an independent association of faiths that is working to offer religion-based resources that lead a universal effort to protect Earth. For more information, visit: www.nrpe.org.

For more information on recycling in the Gaston County area, and for help developing your program, contact the Gaston County Solid Waste and Recycling Division at 704-922-7729.

For your convenience, Gaston County maintains six recycling drop-off centers. Recycling materials can be dropped off at these sites at no charge.

