

Recycling and Waste Reduction at Work

Restaurants and Bars Fact Sheet

There are a number of simple ways that restaurants and bars can implement recycling and waste reduction practices. The information in this fact sheet is designed to help restaurant and bar owners and employees in Gaston County understand the importance of recycling and waste reduction, and to provide guidance on beginning a recycling and waste reduction program.



How Do We Get Started?

How Does Waste Reduction and Recycling Benefit Us?

Improves Public Image. The public appreciates businesses that are making an effort to be environmentally friendly. In fact, having a waste reduction and recycling program can help increase your business.

Improves the Bottom Line. Waste reduction increases your operating efficiency, reduces the trash produced, and decreases the number of supplies that need to be purchased. This all adds up to spending less, which saves money for you.

Keeps You Legal. NC General Statutes ban a number of items from the landfill, and more will be banned in 2008 and 2009. Plus, if you serve alcoholic beverages on-site, the new ABC Permit Holder Recycling Legislation may apply to you.

- 1. Get Committed.** To be effective, a waste reduction and recycling program must have support from management. Show your commitment by making resources available, and provide your staff with the time and assistance they need to do the job right. Depending on the size of your establishment, you may want to designate a staff member or a group of employees to be the "Green Team" that is in charge of the program.
- 2. Know Your Waste.** In a restaurant, you can expect to see a lot of cardboard, food waste, and steel food cans. Depending on how drinks are served, there may also be a number of plastic, aluminum, and glass containers in the trash. Perform a waste assessment so that you can really see how much you are throwing away. Examine the contents of dumpsters and trash cans and determine which materials make up the largest percentage of your waste stream. Talk to kitchen and wait staff to see where they notice the most wastefulness. This is also a good time to look for waste reduction ideas. Is a large portion of your waste stream made up of disposable plates and silverware? If so, it might save money to switch to reusable materials and save the disposables for "to go" orders. 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 a number of ways to implement a recycling program, but the major factors that you will need to consider are the recycling facilities in your area, the amount of space that you have for storage, the amount of time needed for collections, and the amount of money available. In the Gaston County area, there are a number of local recycling companies, and there are six County-run drop-off recycling centers located around the County for your convenience.

- a. Recycling Facilities and Services.** Refer back to the results of your waste assessment. Are there companies in the area that can recycle the waste materials that you have? Can they pick up your materials, or will you have to transport your recyclables to them? Do they pay for recyclables, or is it simply free disposal? Do your materials need to be sorted a specific way before they can be recycled at that facility? Do materials need to be baled, or will the company accept materials loose or in bags? At

TIP: Always include your employees in the planning process – especially the ones that will have an active role in collecting or sorting the materials. This will improve participation and morale since they will feel that it is "their" program rather than something they are being required to do.

this point, you might also want to check on your current waste hauling contract. Can you add recycling containers and hauling to your current service contract? All of these questions will have an impact on the way you implement recycling at your facility.

- b. **Storage Space.** Many recycling companies are willing to pick up your recycling...if you have enough of it. Do you have enough space outside for a roll-off container (these are usually about 8 feet wide by 22 feet long)? If so, you might be able to have a company provide a container for your recycling. If space is not available outside, is there storage space inside your facility? Will you be able to store enough material for a company to pick up your recycling, or is your storage space small enough that you will need to take the materials to a recycling center yourself?
 - c. **Time Considerations.** How will recyclables be collected and taken to the storage area or the recycling facility? Will you have certain staff members collect the recycling and transport it outside, or will everyone be required to take their own recycling to a certain place? Will your staff need to spend any time preparing materials for the recycling company (i.e. sorting materials or emptying bags)? If you will be implementing new equipment like a baler or a composter, will you have time for in-depth training?
 - d. **Funding Considerations.** How many recycling containers do you need, and what sizes will be appropriate? Do the bins need to be custom-made to fit into certain spaces, or can you use standard containers? Will you need to purchase a baler, a composter, or some other piece of equipment? If your staff will be collecting materials from inside the building, do you have containers that they can use to transport collected materials from one area to another?
- 4. Set Goals.** Decide which waste reduction and recycling practices you will use, and come up with a plan for implementation. What are you trying to accomplish? Do you want to reduce a certain amount of waste, or decrease costs by a certain amount? How will you determine whether or not your program is a success? You will also need to determine how you will track weight and cost information. Can you get weights from your hauler or from the recycling company, or do you need to estimate weights or count the number of full containers? Will you track the 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. Provide education sessions for your employees. Let your employees 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 – you will need to provide education sessions on a regular basis for all employees, just to remind them of the program and acceptable materials. Recycling education will also need to be a part of your training program for new employees.
- 6. Implement Your Program.** Place 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. As you add more materials, and get more comfortable with the program, you will find more efficient ways to do things. Make sure that you take the time to evaluate your recycling program and gauge whether or not you are meeting your goals.

Keeping Patrons Informed

The public likes to know that businesses that they frequent are environmentally friendly. Letting your patrons know about your waste reduction and recycling efforts will help keep them informed, and may even increase your business.

- Print recycling and waste reduction information on your menus to let the public know about your program.
- If menus are printed on recycled-content paper, make sure that statement is printed on the menus.
- Post signs in your establishment to let patrons know how much waste has been recycled or reduced.
- Use table tents to advertise your waste reduction and recycling efforts.

Waste Reduction and Recycling...

Easy Tips for Restaurants and Bars

In Dining Areas:

- Reduce the use of disposable items whenever possible, including cups, dishes, and silverware. Consider using washable tablecloths or placements in place of paper.
- Whenever possible, serve drinks from bulk containers (i.e. fountain drinks) rather than single-serve containers.
- Serve straws from dispensers rather than offering individually wrapped straws.
- Use refillable condiment dispensers instead of individual condiment packets for dine-in customers.
- Use coasters instead of paper napkins when serving beverages.
- Distribute disposable silverware and individual-sized serving packets from behind the counter rather than placing them out in the dining area.
- When using disposable serving containers, make sure to match container size to meal size to eliminate excess packaging.
- Implement a reusable mug program where regular customers can purchase a refillable mug or cup and bring it with them for discounted refills.
- Advertise your waste reduction efforts – print information on menus, and advertise your progress on wall hangings or table tents.

At the Bar:

- Whenever possible, serve drinks from bulk containers (i.e. fountain drinks) rather than single-serve containers.
- Serve straws from dispensers rather than offering individually wrapped straws.
- Switch to reusable coasters instead of placing drinks on napkins.
- Buy bar mixes in concentrated forms when possible, and mix in reusable containers.
- Collect cardboard, plastic, glass, steel, and aluminum cans for recycling.

In the Kitchen:

- Rotate perishable items when shipments are delivered. This minimizes food spoilage by making sure that older stocks are used first.
- Check the quantities of perishable items that are being used, and adjust the number or frequency of deliveries to minimize the amount of spoilage.
- Donate excess edible food to a local food bank or soup kitchen.

- Make sure that grease traps are properly maintained.
- Recycle cooking oil and grease.
- Switch to reusable coffee filters rather than disposable ones.
- Use refillable condiment bottles (ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, sugar, etc.) and refill them from condiments purchased in bulk.
- Use daily production charts to minimize over-prepping and unnecessary waste. When possible, prepare foods as they are ordered rather than in advance.
- Evaluate and adjust portion sizes if they are consistently being returned unfinished.
- Consider offering a “half” or “reduced” portion size for light eaters.
- Use reusable, rather than disposable, hats, aprons, and uniforms for employees.
- Collect cardboard, glass bottles, steel cans, and aluminum cans for recycling.

For Equipment:

- Implement a weekly maintenance program for all equipment to prolong service life.
- Clean fryers and filter cooking oil daily to extend the life of the fryer and the oil.
- Use a test kit to tell you when to change fryer oil, rather than guessing or changing at specific times.
- Keep oven equipment properly calibrated to maximize energy efficiency and prevent over-baked products.
- Use rubber mats around bus and dishwashing stations to reduce china and glass breakage.
- Install hot air hand dryers in restrooms to replace paper towels.

Purchasing:

- Whenever possible, purchase materials made with recycled content. Look for recycled-content paper towels, napkins, to-go containers, trash bags, and storage bins.
- Order items in bulk to reduce packaging waste.
- Whenever possible, buy products with minimal packaging or with recyclable packaging.

Cleaning:

- Purchase multi-purpose cleaners non-toxic or less toxic.
- Use refillable spray bottles rather than aerosol can cleaners.
- Use washable cloths for cleaning rather than paper towels.

Legal Requirements

North Carolina General Statute

130A-309.10(f): Bans certain items from being disposed of in landfills. The main item that applies to restaurants and bars is **aluminum cans**. However, white goods (large appliances like dishwashers and ovens), used motor oil, yard debris, antifreeze, whole scrap tires, and lead-acid batteries are also included under this law.

House Bill 1518: This bill affects only holders of on-premises malt beverage, on-premises unfortified wine, on-premises fortified wine and mixed beverages permits. The bill requires holders of these permits to separate, store and recycle **all recyclable beverage containers** that are sold at retail for on-premises consumption. House Bill 1518 becomes effective Jan. 1, 2008. The full text of this bill is available online at <http://www.p2pays.org/ref/38/37334.pdf>.

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?

The North Carolina Department of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (NC DPPEA) has information about the upcoming ABC Permit Holder Recycling Legislation. Find out more at www.p2pays.org/BannedMaterials/ABCcontainer/index.asp.

The Glass Packaging Institute has some good information on glass bottle recycling. Visit www.gpi.org/recycling/Restaurant/ to find out more.

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.

