



Massachusetts
Department
of
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

fact sheet

Recycling Matters! Commercial & Office Recycling

This fact sheet provides an overview of issues to consider when establishing a recycling program for the workplace. Understanding the costs and benefits of recycling will help you develop a plan that is cost-effective and attractive to staff and management.

How recycling benefits everyone in Massachusetts

- **Recycling saves money**
We throw away approximately 1.5 million tons of paper every year. If we recycled half of this paper, we would save nearly \$52 million in disposal costs.
- **Recycling means jobs**
Approximately 14,000 people are employed at about 2,000 recycling businesses in Massachusetts.
- **Recycling saves resources and energy**
Massachusetts recycles enough paper each year to prevent the cutting of nearly 17 million trees and saved over 85 trillion BTUs of energy in one year, enough to power 820,000 homes.
- **Recycling reduces greenhouse gases**
Recycling helps Massachusetts residents reduce the equivalent of 2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually. That equates to taking 1.6 million passenger cars off the road each year.

Why should businesses consider recycling?

- **Waste Bans**
Certain hazardous and recyclable items are banned from disposal, transfer for disposal and contracting for disposal in Massachusetts.
Business managers should remove and recycle any banned materials they generate or run the risk that waste loads will be rejected at a disposal site, charged an additional handling fee or be subject to MassDEP enforcement.
- **It's Simple**
Recycling at businesses can be easier and more economical than recycling at home, because the materials are generated in larger quantities and are easier to keep separate from the rest of the trash.
- **Helps your bottom line**
Because of high solid waste tip fees, recycling programs at businesses and institutions are often less expensive than waste disposal. Recycling is an opportunity to gain valuable recognition in the eyes of both employees and customers.

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alternate format by calling our ADA
Coordinator at
(617) 574-6872.



What major recyclables come from the commercial and office sectors?

- **Paper, cardboard, wood pallets**
Many offices and commercial buildings generate office paper, newspaper, and cardboard. Most retailers flatten or bale cardboard boxes to save space in their dumpsters, reduce collection costs and receive more revenue from these materials.
- **Bottles and cans**
Beverage containers with and without a five-cent deposit value can be collected for recycling. Restaurants can use beverage container deposits as leverage to attract recycling services for non-deposit food and beverage containers.
- **Food and yard waste**
Many institutional cafeterias, supermarkets and restaurants have implemented food waste composting programs. Some restaurants have established relationships with local pig farmers to remove food scraps for feed, while others divert material to compost sites. According to The US EPA, food waste losses account for \$30-\$40 billion annually within the commercial and institutional sector¹. Yard waste composting programs are very important to institutions that have small and large grounds.
- **Cooking oils, fats, greases**
Collecting used oils, fats and greases for rendering or biofuel production is commonplace in restaurants and other large food service operations. Restaurants have strong incentives to avoid disposal because they often use smaller dumpsters to conserve space, and pay for more frequent pick-ups of waste.
- **Office furniture and equipment**
Many entities in the commercial sector donate usable surplus furniture and office equipment to local non-profit organizations or schools. This allows for reuse and less disposal fees.

How do I make a recycling program cost effective?

- **Identify your materials and service providers**
Identify the materials that you generate in the largest quantities and Consult the RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program (www.recyclingworksma.com) to identify service providers. Compare costs and services across vendors, including your current service provider(s).
- **Make material revenues**
The price of recycling collection depends on the market for that material, as well as the efficiency of the hauler's collection route. Look for a recycler who has an established route in your area and who may be able to collect more cost-effectively.

¹ US EPA: Putting Surplus Food to Good Use

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/materials/organics/pubs/food-guide.pdf>

- **Make adjustments**

As a customer, continually check your waste invoices and communicate with your hauler. As you increase recycling, it is critical to adjust your disposal services to realize the benefit of avoided disposal costs. Consider reducing the frequency of rubbish pickups or the number/size of dumpsters you need to realize savings from avoided disposal costs.

How will recycling affect my handling costs?

Depending on the service you negotiate, recycling can add to or subtract from your custodial hours. Do not compare floor-by-floor collections with loading dock collections solely on the basis of price. If you do not have the time or staff to carry materials to the loading dock, a high-service recycler that will collect floor-by-floor may be worth paying for.

How much space will recycling require?

The volume of a material that a recycling vendor gets from a single trip makes a difference in his or her earnings. It also affects your storage space needs. Before calling vendors, decide where you will store recyclables between pick-ups. Negotiating a minimum pick-up amount is often more important than negotiating over pennies per pound.

How will the recycling program look?

Plan around the aesthetic and functional needs of your office. You will need indoor bins in convenient areas, which will probably be visible to staff and customers. The indoor bins will most likely be emptied into larger collection containers that are stored out of sight of your customers. Communicate with your vendor and discuss containers that will work for you.

Where can I find more information about recycling in Massachusetts?

Please visit the following web sites for more information:

- RecyclingWorks in MA website: <http://www.recyclingworksma.com/>
- Find a Recycler Database: <http://www.recyclingworksma.com/find-a-recycler/>
- Massachusetts Waste Disposal Bans: <http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/solid/wastebans.htm>
- Donation and Reuse Programs: <http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/reduce/donation.htm>
- Reducing Food Waste: A how to guide for businesses and institutions: <http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/reduce/reducefw.pdf>

Or, contact the RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program at (888)254-5525 or at info@recyclingworksma.com.

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