



RECYCLING IN THE WORKPLACE

Ready. Set. Go!

Tips and perspectives from the
American Forest & Paper Association



Ready.

Congratulations!

By requesting this how-to guide, you've taken the first step toward bringing paper recycling to your workplace. Use the recommendations below to guide your efforts and discover the keys to getting a successful recycling program up and running. (Although this guide focuses on paper, the basic principles will apply to all recyclables.)

Here's what you'll need to get started:

Get the facts to target the right recyclables. Recycling helps the environment by recovering valuable resources and turning them into new products we use every day. To make sure your program targets the right items, conduct an audit of your workplace's waste stream to identify and quantify potentially recyclable materials. Specifically, look for items that are:

- present in significant quantities,
- relatively free of contamination, and
- easily separated from other materials.

Find a market for what you plan to collect. Collection is just the first step in recycling. How will the paper you collect in your workplace connect with the recycling stream? You'll need to identify a vendor or market that will take your recyclables and transport them for processing. Your property manager or current waste hauler may be able to play this role, which will help keep things simple. Your municipal or county recycling office may also be able to help you find a market.

The ultimate success of your recycling efforts will hinge on clear and continuous communications with your property manager or waste hauler to:

- target the right items for collection,
- maintain cost-effective collection schedules,
- identify and correct potential contamination issues, and
- maximize the benefits of your program.





Common recyclable paper products in the workplace:

- Offices: copy paper, stationery, notebook paper, envelopes, magazines, file folders, and paper-based packaging
- Retail stores and warehouses: office paper and paper-based packaging

Common contaminants include:

Food, staples, metal closures, tapes, glues, adhesives, rubber bands, and glass, aluminum, and/or plastic packaging

Get management on board. A workplace recycling program does more than help the environment and yield potential cost savings. Done right, a recycling program boosts morale and facilitates teambuilding, especially when there is visible management support behind it. To be sure you get that support, target the right decisionmakers and gather all the necessary information:

- program costs/savings,
- public relations opportunities, and
- environmental benefits.

Set.

Here are some things you'll need to consider when designing your collection program:

Organize your collection procedures. Your goal here is to make it as easy as possible for your fellow employees to participate (and participate correctly) while meeting the requirements of your market. In many cases, custodial staff will play a key role in emptying recycling containers and preparing materials for pickup by the hauler. Get them involved in the program design stage.

Consider:

- How often should containers be emptied, and by whom?
- How/where will collected materials be stored prior to transfer to market?
- Who will be responsible for making sure the right items are ending up in the recycling bin?

Reach out for local expertise.

Find out what municipalities and other companies in your area are doing to make recycling happen. If you're in an office environment, you should also engage your property management early in the process.

Find more on paperrecycles.org.

This useful website offers a host of valuable tools and information to support your recycling efforts. For example, you can find out what some award-winning workplace recycling programs have done to educate and motivate employees and maximize results.

Pick the right collection containers. Place containers as close as possible to where recyclables are generated. Recycling containers should be easy to recognize (e.g. a different color than regular waste containers).

- In an office setting, place a clearly marked recycling container at every desk.
- Place larger collection containers in common areas (roughly one for every 15-20 employees).
- Wherever possible, place recycling containers next to regular waste containers to facilitate separation.

Educate and motivate employees.

Your fellow employees can make or break your program. Get them involved, informed, and energized to make recycling a success. Kick off the program with a presentation that emphasizes the benefits of recycling and clearly communicates how your program will work. But don't stop there!

- Post signs on/near collection containers that clearly indicate what goes in and what should be kept out (illustrations help).
- Identify employees who are enthusiastic about your program and enlist them as "recycling champions" to sell your program to other employees.
- Create competitions among departments, floors, or divisions to make recycling fun.

Take your program for a test drive.

In larger organizations, it is wise to test out the system you've designed on a limited scale, such as a single floor or department. This will allow you to identify any elements that aren't working and make adjustments before rolling out the program company-wide.



CASE STUDY: Giant Eagle, Inc. *2009 AF&PA Recycling Award winner*

Giant Eagle, a Pennsylvania-based supermarket chain, has a tradition of successful paper recycling initiatives dating back to 1972, the year Giant Eagle stores began baling corrugated cardboard for recovery. Their efforts expanded in 1986 to include computer paper at corporate headquarters. Today Giant Eagle recovers mixed office paper and corrugated cardboard at all of its offices, retail support centers, corporately owned supermarkets, and select fuel stations.

To further its commitment to recycling, Giant Eagle established the Utility and Recycling Initiative in 2007 to educate their supermarket team members on how to increase recycling volumes and reduce energy usage. Efforts to increase recovery of recyclables include technology improvements and a training and education program.

For more information on the Giant Eagle program and other AF&PA Recycling Award winners, visit paperrecycles.org.

Go!

Congratulations! Your kickoff event was a success and your program is up and running. Hats off for a job well done!

But don't let up now. Make sure that your program runs as efficiently and effectively as you hoped it would. Work with your recycling champions, custodial staff, and the property manager or hauler to identify any problems or opportunities for improvement.

Measure your results. Good data is key to managing a successful collection program. Arrange for your property manager or hauler to provide regular reports on the following:

- how much is being collected by material (breakdowns by floor or department may be helpful),
- the quality of materials collected and any contamination issues, and
- costs/savings associated with your collection program.

Keep up the communications. Success breeds success. Keep your fellow employees abreast of just how big an impact their efforts are having and you will motivate them to do even more. And if changes are required, tell them why. As always, communicate positively and clearly:

- Distribute program updates via your company's e-mail, newsletter, website, or intranet.
- Survey employees to get their feedback on the program and identify areas for improvement.
- Recognize employees or groups of employees who are especially committed to making your program work.

Spread the word!

As you start to document your program's success, look for opportunities to gain recognition for your company's efforts through awards and competitions. For example, the AF&PA Recycling Awards annually recognize the nation's outstanding business, community, and school paper recycling programs. For more information, visit paperrecycles.org.

And you're off!

By bringing paper recycling to your workplace, you're joining the millions of Americans all across the country who have helped push the paper recovery rate to an unprecedented 57.4 percent in 2008. You'll find more information on paper recycling — including videos, interactives, up-to-date statistics, and case studies from the annual AF&PA Recycling Awards — online at paperrecycles.org.



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