



Recycling and Waste Reduction for the Lodging Industry



Hotels, motels, lodges and inns welcome millions of visitors per year. With their assortment of kitchens, guest rooms, offices, conference centers and laundries, these facilities also produce a lot of waste. Guest rooms alone can produce up to 28 pounds per day, depending on the number of occupants and type of property. Luckily, much of this waste is recyclable. Lodging managers are finding that developing a waste reduction and recycling program improves their image and saves them money.



Why Recycle and Reduce Waste?

To save resources: Recycling saves valuable reusable resources and reduces the energy use and pollution associated with extracting and manufacturing virgin materials.

To reduce costs: Like other businesses, the lodging industry pays for waste disposal. In many cases, recycling services cost significantly less than waste disposal; companies that reuse or recycle more waste can save significant costs. Reusing more materials can also reduce purchasing and handling costs.

To improve customer service: Recycling demonstrates your business' commitment to environmental protection. Surveys indicate over 95 percent of Wisconsin citizens recycle regularly. Offering recycling is just another way to better serve your customers.

What Should Be Recycled in Wisconsin?

- Aluminum, glass, steel (tin) and bi-metal containers
- Plastic containers #1 and #2, including milk jugs and detergent, soda and water bottles
- Magazines, catalogs and other materials printed on similar paper
- Newspaper and office paper
- Corrugated cardboard
- Computers, televisions, desktop printers, computer peripherals, DVD players, VCRs, digital video recorders, fax machines and phones with video displays
- Major appliances including air conditioners, clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, refrigerators, freezers, stoves, ovens, dehumidifiers, furnaces, boilers and water heaters
- Yard waste, including grass clippings, leaves, yard and garden debris
- Lead acid vehicle batteries, automotive waste oils and waste tires
- Used oil filters

Designing Your Recycling and Waste Reduction Program

A successful program is dependent on effective planning, implementation and evaluation. Start with small steps and recycle the materials that will offer the biggest payoff. Once you have a successful recycling program, it's easy to add additional materials.

1. Organize a waste reduction team

A workplace recycling program does more than help the environment and yield potential cost savings. Done right, it boosts morale and facilitates team building. Top-level support will help stimulate employee involvement in the program, and ensure that you get the needed time, materials and equipment to make the program work.



Approaching recycling as a team can help ensure the success of your program. A green team is a group of employees interested in recycling and helping to set up a program. Your green team should develop ways to:

- **Use staff time and resources.**
- **Integrate the program into company procedures.**
- **Incorporate recycling and waste reduction responsibilities into employee job duties and new employee training.**
- **Involve employees in the decision making process.**

2. Understand your waste

Before you start your recycling program, you will need to understand the kinds of waste you are throwing away. Work with your hauler to conduct a waste audit. Common recyclables in the lodging industry include:



IN GUEST AREAS:

- Office paper
- Newspaper
- Cardboard
- Glass, aluminum and plastic beverage containers
- Magazines

IN OFFICE, RESTAURANT AND MAINTENANCE AREAS:

- Cardboard boxes
- Steel cans
- Office paper
- Yard debris
- Food waste
- Printer and toner cartridges
- Construction and demolition debris



Cardboard

Corrugated cardboard probably makes up a large part of your business' waste stream. Recycling cardboard can save money on disposal costs and even earn you some money in return. Many medium-sized and large hotels have purchased balers or compactors to manage their waste cardboard and get a better price for it.

3. Work with your hauler

You probably already have a solid waste contract with a hauler. If your hauler does not offer recycling services, you can contract directly with a recycling service provider. Get a list of what is accepted for recycling and work with your hauler to identify collection methods, frequency of collection, container needs and costs for collecting recyclables and trash. Discuss potential recycling contamination problems and solutions. Consider all items that you might need to dispose of, including appliances, furniture, kitchen grease, florescent bulbs, etc. Often, recycling will reduce your overall solid waste disposal costs.



4. Establish your recycling collection program

A clearly set up, easy-to-use collection system will help you capture a high percentage of your recyclables. When setting up your system:



- **Place recycling bins in easy-to-access, high traffic areas.** Consider putting bins in: the lobby, vending areas, pools or workout rooms, food preparation areas, housekeeping closets, offices, maintenance buildings and grounds.
- **Use recycling bins that look different from trash bins (different colors help) and are clearly labeled.** Signs with photos or images of recyclables placed above your recycling containers can help your staff and guests know what should be recycled.
- **Place trash and recycling bins next to one another where possible.**
- **Put a trash can and recycling bin in each guest room and label them clearly.**



DNR recycling signage. Contact the DNR to use these images for your business.



“Offering recycling is just another way to better serve your customers.”

5. Educate employees

Education—both at the start of your program and over time—is key to making sure your program collects quality recyclables. Help your staff incorporate waste reduction and recycling habits into their daily responsibilities. Teach your employees the importance of keeping recyclables separate from garbage to minimize contamination of recyclables. Incorporate this training into their general employee orientation.



6. Educate your guests

- **Give guests a flier** that describes your recycling and waste reduction programs when they check in.
- **Put informational table tents that describe your recycling and waste reduction program in each guest room.** Pre-printed table tents can be ordered for a small fee from the “Green” Hotels Association (see “Resources for Lodging Operators” for address). You can also make your own and have them printed locally.
- **Discuss the basics of your recycling program with guests at check in.** Many guests will appreciate knowing they have access to recycling while away from home.



7. Evaluate your program

After your program has had time to establish, evaluate your success and make adjustments. Work with your custodial staff, recycling champions and waste hauler to identify problems or opportunities for improvement. Ask your hauler for information on:

- **How much of each material** is being collected.
 - **Quality of materials collected and any contamination issues.**
 - **Costs/savings** associated with your recycling program.
- Share program successes with your employees and let them know how much waste they are preventing and the costs they are saving!



Waste reduction tips for guest rooms

Recycling is one step you can take to make your business more “green,” but if you really want to save resources, waste reduction is the way to go. Here are some tips that have worked in large and small resorts, lodges, motels and hotels.



Reduce solid waste

- **Substitute refillable liquid soap dispensers for individually-wrapped bar soaps in bathrooms.** Though the initial expense for these dispensers may seem high, you will realize a quick return on your investment. Refills and items purchased in bulk are usually less expensive and generate less waste than individual containers.
- **Donate unused shampoos, lotions, bar soap and other single-use items** to day care centers, senior centers, shelters, churches, etc., instead of throwing them away. Check with centers first to make sure they accept these items.
- **Used soaps can be donated** to Clean the World to be made into usable soaps for developing countries.
- **Use washable drinking glasses** instead of disposable glasses.
- **When remodeling, give reusable furniture, bedding, carpet, fixtures, etc., to resale stores or donate items to community groups** like day care centers, shelters or churches. Get a receipt for tax deductions.
- **Instead of giving each room a newspaper, ask guests to pick up a free copy in the lobby if they want one.**

Reduce energy waste

- **Replace standard light bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs.** These bulbs may cost more initially, but pay for themselves over time since they last much longer and use about one-quarter of the electricity of an incandescent bulb.
- **Purchase Energy Star-certified appliances** for use in kitchen, office and guest room areas.

Reduce water waste

- **Repair all water leaks immediately.**
- **Install a water-saving toilet dam in the toilet tank.** Toilet dams, available at hardware stores, can save about one-third of the water commonly used per flush with no change in effectiveness.
- When remodeling bathrooms or replacing broken toilets, **install standard low-flush toilets**
- **Install low-flow water aerators in shower heads and sink faucets.** Aerators do not change water pressure and use 25-50 percent less water per shower.
- **Encourage guests to leave sheets on the bed during their stay** instead of having them changed every day. This reduces the amount of laundry you have to do, saving water, soap, energy, time and money!
- **Encourage guests to take new towels only when they really need them.** Remind them to leave dirty towels on the floor so housekeeping staff will replace only those towels.

Waste reduction tips for other areas



- **Use linen hand towels on a continuous roll or install air dryers** instead of paper towels in the employee, dining and lobby restrooms.
- **Cut up old linens and use them as cleaning rags.**
- **Replace old appliances with newer, energy-efficient appliances.** Recycle the old appliance.
- **Buy products like cleaning supplies in bulk** whenever possible.
- **Use rechargeable batteries** in pagers, cell phones and other electronics. Check with your suppliers for information on how to recycle the used batteries that eventually wear out.
- **Use reusable dishes, mugs and glassware** for your continental breakfast table.
- **Encourage employees to use reusable mugs and glasses for coffee breaks** instead of disposable cups.

Less waste in the office

- **Minimize paper use by copying on both sides** of your paper, or use the blank back sides as scratch paper.
- **Use refillable toner cartridges** instead of disposable ones in your copier and computer printers. Recycle cartridges that are no longer usable.
- **Buy recycled products** whenever possible. Paper products, carpets and carpet pads, landscape edging, picnic tables and construction materials are all widely available from recycled materials.
- **Remove your name from unwanted mailing lists** by calling the 800 phone numbers on catalogs or registering with the Direct Marketing Association at DMAchoice.org.
- **Choose suppliers who can provide reusable or recyclable packaging** and packaging made from recycled content.

Live lightly with the environment

- **Use water-based paints instead of oil-based paints.** Donate unused paint to a community service agency or a local paint exchange. Leftover oil-based paint is considered a hazardous waste and must be brought to a hazardous waste collection event for proper disposal.
- **Use cleaners without oil-based solvents.**
- **If you're using lawn chemicals, take precaution to keep them off of paved driveways, sidewalks and streets so they don't run into storm drains.** Follow directions exactly and only buy as much as you need. Consider natural alternatives for lawn care such as compost for fertilizer and manually pulling weeds.
- **Recycle fluorescent bulbs.**
- **Recycle electronics**, including TVs from guest rooms and office computers. For more information, see the E-Cycle Wisconsin program: dnr.wi.gov/ecyclewisconsin/.



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Bureau of Waste and Materials Management/WA/5
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Madison, WI 53707-7921

For more information on away from home recycling, or to order publications, contact DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov or (608) 266-2111.

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Resources

For additional information on recycling in Wisconsin, contact the DNR Waste and Materials Management Program at DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov or 608-266-2111.

Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin —

A nonprofit association of business, government, nonprofits and trade associations. See www.arow-online.org. Contact AROW at admin@arow-online.org or (608) 843-7360.

Clean the World — A nonprofit organization that collects used soaps from hotels, motels, and other lodging businesses to make into usable soaps for developing countries. www.cleantheworld.org.

Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center —

Provides information and technical assistance to businesses on waste reduction, recycling and pollution prevention. See www.uwex.edu/shwec/. Contact SHWEC at shwec-help@uwm.edu.

Travel Green Wisconsin — A voluntary program that reviews, certifies and recognizes tourism businesses and organizations that have made a commitment to reducing their environmental impact. www.travelwisconsin.com/wisconsin/Travel-Green

WasteCap Resources, Inc. — A nonprofit dedicated to providing waste reduction and recycling assistance for the benefit of business and the environment. See www.wastecap.org. Contact WasteCap at wastecap@wastecap.org or (414) 961-1100 or (608) 245-1100.

Wisconsin Business Recycling Toolkit

— A toolkit for commercial, business, institutions and other away from home recycling. See www.shwec.uwm.edu/recyclingtoolkit/.

Wisconsin Recycling Markets Directory

— A detailed listing of a wide variety of recycling contractors and haulers located throughout the state. See www.wisconsinrecyclingdirectory.com.