



# Recycling and Waste Reduction at Convenience Stores and Gas Stations



Wisconsin convenience stores and gas stations welcome visitors from Wisconsin and beyond. Often these stops are the only places travelers will visit before arriving at their destinations. People used to recycling at home and work have come to rely on convenience stores and gas stations for recycling while on the road. Luckily, recycling not only protects valuable reusable resources, it also helps your business save money and promotes your business as environmentally friendly.



## 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, convenience stores and gas stations pay for waste disposal. In many cases, recycling services cost significantly less than trash disposal; companies that reuse or recycle more waste can save significant costs on waste disposal. Reusing more materials can also reduce purchasing and handling costs.

**To improve customer service:** Recycling demonstrates your business' commitment to environmental protection. A recent survey indicates over 95% of Wisconsin citizens recycle regularly. People now expect to find recycling containers wherever they travel. 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've established a successful recycling program, you can expand your program to recycle more materials.



## Keep your recyclables clean

Travelers and shoppers who frequent convenience stores may find your recycling bins a convenient place to dump their trash. Diapers, food waste and paper packaging can be kept out of your recycling bins with a little creativity and customer education. Here are suggestions from convenience store operators and wayside station managers who have effectively organized their recyclable and trash collection systems.

- **Use a different lid color for recycling bins (blue) than for trash bin lids (brown).**
- **Post a "Recyclables only! No trash!" sign on recycling bins.**
- **Use bin lids with hinged flappers shaped like the items that should be put inside.** Put a picture of the appropriate items on the flappers. The flapper alerts customers when dumping their waste in the bin. It also provides an educational message to users.
- **Educate customers about recycling and waste reduction** with signs and posters at the filling areas, near the bins and inside the stores.

## 1. Understand your waste

Before you start your recycling program, you will need to understand the kinds of waste your business deals with. To begin to assess your waste, look through all your trash bins for several weeks throughout the year. List the types and weights of items customers and staff throw away. Common recyclables at convenience stores and gas stations include:



### PAPER

- Office paper
- Newspaper
- Magazines
- Corrugated cardboard

### CONTAINERS

- Aluminum cans
- Steel (tin) cans
- Glass bottles and jars
- Plastic containers (#1 and #2)

### OTHER MATERIALS

- Waste tires
- Lead-acid vehicle batteries
- Yard wastes
- Used motor oil, oil absorbents and oil absorbent materials

## 2. Reduce waste

If your store throws away a lot of packaging or disposable products, you are throwing away money and resources. Your suppliers may also be wasting money on excess packaging. Reduce the amount you throw away to cut back on disposal costs:



- **Ask vendors to use reusable shipping containers** (crates, pallets and boxes). These can be returned and exchanged during the next delivery.
- **Sell reusable mugs printed with your store logo** and allow customers to refill the mug at a discount.
- **Use cloth towels instead of paper** in restrooms or use an air dryer.
- **Purchase multipurpose, concentrated cleaning supplies** rather than job-specific, ready-to-use supplies. Use the least toxic cleaner available and appropriate for your needs.
- **Minimize use of trash bags.** Compact the trash in your garbage bins and only empty bins when full.
- **Donate or compost excess food instead of throwing it away.** Food banks, listed in the Yellow Pages, may accept some excess food items for redistribution. Local farmers may use food waste as pig feed or as a compost supplement.
- **Remove your business' name from unwanted subscription and mailing lists** by calling the 800 numbers on catalogs or registering with the Direct Marketing Association at [DMAchoice.org](http://DMAchoice.org).

### 3. Identify items to recycle and develop a recycling system with your hauler

After assessing your waste stream and reducing what waste you can, talk with your hauler about recycling options for your store.

Often, your garbage hauler can also take recycling. If you need assistance finding or selecting a hauler, contact your local recycling program.

Once you have selected a hauler, work with them to develop a collection process and pickup schedule based on the recyclables generated at your store. Be sure to discuss whether you will need additional dumpsters for recycling and if they will provide these items.



### 4. Set up your collection system

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 high traffic areas of your store and gas pumping areas:** next to your cash registers, by entrances and exits and next to gas pumps.
- **Use trash and recycling bins that look different from one another and are clearly marked.** Signs with photos or images of recyclables placed above your recycling containers can help staff and visitors know what should be recycled.
- **Place trash and recycling bins next to one another** where possible.



### 5. Educate employees

To ensure the success of your recycling program, it's important to get all your staff on board. Talk to managers, cashiers, maintenance staff and stockers so they are aware of your recycling program and policies. To instill a sense of commitment to the program, owners and managers need to:



- **Integrate recycling operations into store procedures.**
- **Incorporate recycling and waste reduction methods into employee responsibilities and new employee training.**
- **Involve employees in the development and maintenance of your program.** Because they regularly interact with customers, employees often provide the best insights into new strategies.

### 6. Evaluate your program

After your program has had some time to get established, evaluate your success and make adjustments. Work with your staff 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.** Work to correct these issues.
- **Costs/savings** associated with your recycling program.

Be sure to share program successes with your employees and customers to let them know how much waste they are preventing!



### 7. Expand your program

After developing a successful program, consider expanding out to recycle other materials. With recycling processes in place, it's easy to recycle additional materials like batteries, cell phones, food wastes and others.



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

## Resources

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

### **Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin** —

A nonprofit association of business, government, nonprofits and trade associations. See [www.arowonline.org](http://www.arowonline.org). Contact AROW at [admin@arowonline.org](mailto:admin@arowonline.org) or (608) 843-7360.

### **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/](http://www.uwex.edu/shwec/). Contact SHWEC at [shwec-help@uwm.edu](mailto:shwec-help@uwm.edu).

### **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](http://www.wastecap.org). Contact WasteCap at [wastecap@wastecap.org](mailto: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/](http://www.shwec.uwm.edu/recyclingtoolkit/).

### **Wisconsin Recycling Markets**

**Directory** — A detailed directory of recyclers, haulers and contractors throughout the state. Enter the item you would like to recycle to see a list of recyclers in your area.

See [www.wisconsinrecyclingdirectory.com](http://www.wisconsinrecyclingdirectory.com).



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



## **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

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Madison, WI 53707-7921

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

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