Business Recycling Guide

Introduction

In 1992, Monroe County passed a recycling law that requires all residents, businesses, industries and institutions to recycle. Everyone has a role to play in recycling. We want to help businesses understand the law and how it affects employers and employees. The following provides information necessary for business managers to set up a recycling collection system that works for everyone involved—management, employees, custodial staff and the recycling collector. If you have additional questions or need further information, please contact **mcdes@monroecounty.gov**.

What to Recycle

Paper -- Businesses, institutions (schools/colleges) and industries *must recycle* corrugated cardboard and high-grade (office) paper--**all clean paper**, however, may voluntarily be recycled. Unless other specific arrangements are made with a waste hauler, all paper can be mixed together in the recycling container--**there is no need to separate paper by type** (exception-shredded paper should be contained in paper bags or boxes- not plastic bags).

Plastic, Metal, and Glass Containers -- Businesses, institutions and industries that have cafeteria-type services and all restaurants *must* recycle the following containers used in food preparation-type activities: steel, aluminum, glass food and beverage bottles, jugs and jars and plastics (#s 1 and 2). Paper containers (gable-top cartons/drink boxes), empty steel aerosol cans (no pesticides or spray paint), plastics (#s 3-7) and pots/pans/foilware *may also be recycled*. All appropriate containers must be rinsed and caps/lids should be reattached (labels OK). Containers used by students/staff (milk cartons, soda bottles, soup cans, etc.) are not required to be separated for recycling. Again, all appropriate containers that **are** separated for recycling must be rinsed and caps/lids attached prior to recycling. These containers should be mixed together in the recycling container--**there is no need to separate containers by type**.

For information on how certain qualified small businesses can dispose of/recycle hazardous waste, visit https://www2.monroecounty.gov/des-cesqg.php.

It is illegal for businesses, institutions and industries to dispose of electronic waste (computers, TVs, printer cartridges, etc.) in the regular trash. Please visit https://www.monroecounty.gov/ecopark/electronics.php for electronics recycling options.

Business Recycling Guide - Responsibilities

Business Manager

- **Set up the collection system.**
  You should work with your collector to set up a system that will work best for you, your employees, and your collector. Setting up a system may take some time so call your collector as soon as possible to begin the planning process. If you rent office space, and refuse/recycling service is provided by the complex, contact your property manager to make sure your recycling needs are covered.
- **Educate employees and staff.**
  Let your employees and staff know what they will be expected to do and encourage them to get involved in planning your recycling program. Their input is important in creating a convenient and efficient program. Remember, your employees are the ones who will make the program work.
- **Monitor the system.**
  It will take time to work the bugs out of any new system. Keep in contact with your employees and your collector to make sure everything is running smoothly. If recyclables are going in with the regular trash, or if the recyclable loads are contaminated with non-recyclable materials, your cost for recycling and waste disposal will likely increase.

Recycling Collector

- **Provide recycling equipment.**
  In most cases, your recycling collector will provide the major equipment needed to recycle under the system that you work out. You will probably need to provide your own collection bins inside the office/facility.
- **Pick up recyclables.**
  Your collector is required to provide recycling as a part of its solid waste services. Recyclables will be picked up by your collector only if they are prepared properly. If containers have non-recyclables in them, they won't be picked up, or there may be an additional charge.

Employees

- **Abide the law.**
  The Recycling Law requires everyone to recycle at work and home. The success of the program ultimately rests upon the participation of your employees. Make sure they know that they have to recycle and how to do it. Periodic reminders will help keep interest and participation levels high–and contamination levels low.

County

- **Education.**
  The county provides a number of educational and promotional materials to business managers, professional associations, and recycling collectors. County staff is available to work with business managers and collectors to develop new educational materials addressing issues that may arise in implementing and maintaining your recycling program.
  Contact **mcdes@monroecounty.gov** to receive information.
- **Process and market recyclables.**
  Many of the materials that are collected for recycling will go to the County's Recycling Center on Lee Road in Rochester for processing and marketing. The county maintains long-term marketing arrangements to ensure that all recyclable materials are in fact recycled.

Designing a Collection System

When designing your collection system, there are several factors that should be considered:

1. **Building**
   The system you choose depends largely on the layout/size of your business. You have a choice of using one or more of the following collection systems:
   - materials are collected from each office/food service work area;
   - employees empty desktop containers into large containers on each floor;
   - employees deliver recyclables to containers within each individual building; or,
   - employees deliver recyclables to outdoor containers serving more than one building. If you rent space in a complex, some of these components may already be provided by your property manager.
2. **Containers**
   Many types and sizes of containers are available for the collection and storage of recyclables. Work with your collector to determine which containers best fit your needs. Key considerations include available storage space, quantities of recyclable materials generated, and accessibility and compatibility with your collector's equipment.

   Recycling receptacles should ideally be paired with trash containers. As you evaluate your current container system, you may find that you have more trash receptacles than recycle bins available to staff, customers, students etc. To make recycling as easy and convenient as throwing items in the garbage:

- o Add a recycling bin next to each trash receptacle
- o Reduce overall trash receptacles so that each waste station consists of a recycling bin and a trash bin
- o Clearly label each bin as trash or recycling
- o Incorporate signs depicting which types of materials generated at the location are acceptable for recycling and which items should be placed in trash

3. **Cost**
Setting up a recycling system may require some investment. It is important to work with your collector to find the most effective, cost-efficient system for your building(s). A properly managed recycling program will more than pay for itself by reducing garbage costs.

4. **Accessibility**
Collection areas should be accessible to those people who will use them, including those with special needs. Inside, place collections bins close to points of paper generation. Outside, you may want to limit access to all containers to avoid illegal dumping and contamination problems.

5. **Weather**
Store recyclables in a place that is safe from rain, wind, and snow.

6. **Odors/Insects**
Dirty recyclable food and beverage containers may emit odors or attract insects. That's why it's important to rinse out containers for recycling. Keep this in mind when selecting a collection/storage location.

7. **Custodial Services**
If you contract for custodial or janitorial services, you may need to modify your agreement to include the management of recyclables.

Quality Control

Communication
Communication is the key to success in any project—and it will certainly be the key to business recycling. As a business manager, it is important for you to communicate with your employees, staff and collector on a regular basis. Let them know of your commitment to recycling—commitment from the top will encourage participation.

Your employees and maintenance and custodial staff need to know that they are required to recycle and how they will be able to do so. If a problem arises, your collector needs to know so that it can be quickly resolved.

Educational Materials
Education materials—brochures, handouts—will help you communicate your system to your employees. The County can provide general materials on the Recycling Law and instructions on how to prepare materials for recycling. It is also important for you to educate your employees about your specific collection system through flyers, workshops or orientation sessions.

Monitor Your System
It is in your best interest to monitor your system for effectiveness and cleanliness. If your collector takes a load of recyclables that are not clean, the materials will be rejected and landfilled. This will result in additional costs to your hauler and these costs will be passed on to you. What is a clean load? A clean load means that all the material placed in the container for your collector to pick up are acceptable recyclable materials. Monitoring of the system will help you control your costs.

Feedback
Seek input from your employees. Feedback from those who use the system will let you know how the system is working and where it can be improved. Give your employees feedback as well. They will want to know that their efforts are successful and appreciated.

Enforcement
Recycling is required by law. Most employees will recycle out of a sense of responsibility and a concern for the environment. Some may not. There are several things you can do to ensure participation:

- Talk to your employees. Communication is the best means of increasing participation. Some employees may help identify ways to increase participation and quality control. Peer pressure is a valuable tool in ensuring participation.
- Put a recycling section in your training manual for new employees explaining the Recycling Law and how your recycling program works.
- Work with the employees who are enthusiastic about recycling. Establish team leaders who will take on the responsibility of reminding other workers in their department or in their building to recycle. Remember to recognize your team leaders for their efforts. These employees may be offered incentives or receive special recognition for their efforts.

Other Things You Can Do

Recycling is an important step we can take to more effectively manage our solid waste. It is, however, only part of the solution. Other things that your business can do to help the environment include:

1. **Reduce Your Waste Stream**
   Reducing the amount of waste that is generated locally is just as important as recycling. Look for methods of reusing materials before you recycle them. You can reduce waste at your office by making double-sided copies, using reusable dishware and cups, establishing a central file system, circulating memos and reports instead of making multiple copies, and using scrap paper for notes and messages.
2. **Buy Recycled Products**
   You can also initiate a company policy that encourages the purchase of recycled products over non-recycled products. Purchasing recycled products completes the recycling loop and helps ensure markets for recyclables.
3. **Reuse Materials through Exchanges.** The Western New York Materials Exchange (MAT-EX) www.mat-ex.org is an opportunity for businesses to exchange unwanted/unusable products that would otherwise end up in a landfill. The MAT-EX website also allows businesses to locate free/inexpensive materials that can be used in daily business operations. Logon to MAT-EX and see what is available for your business and add materials to the MAT-EX listing.