

## Recycling and Waste Reduction at Convenience Stores

Wisconsin convenience stores host local and long distance travelers who often look for a place to dispose of their recyclables and trash. As an industry that serves the public in Wisconsin, convenience stores must provide opportunities for customers and employees to recycle. Convenience stores can also do much more to help the environment, and reduce costs, by adopting simple strategies to minimize waste and expand recycling.

### Waste reduction and recycling: it's not only good business—it's the law\*

The Waste Reduction and Recycling Law requires businesses and property owners to:

- Provide separate containers for the materials banned from landfills and incinerators (see below)
- Regularly educate the occupants and users of the business' facilities about the recycling program
- Arrange for the collection and delivery of the recyclables to a recycling facility
- Post a sign (if you sell motor oil) that tells customers where the nearest used oil collection facility is



### Materials banned from disposal in Wisconsin:

#### Paper

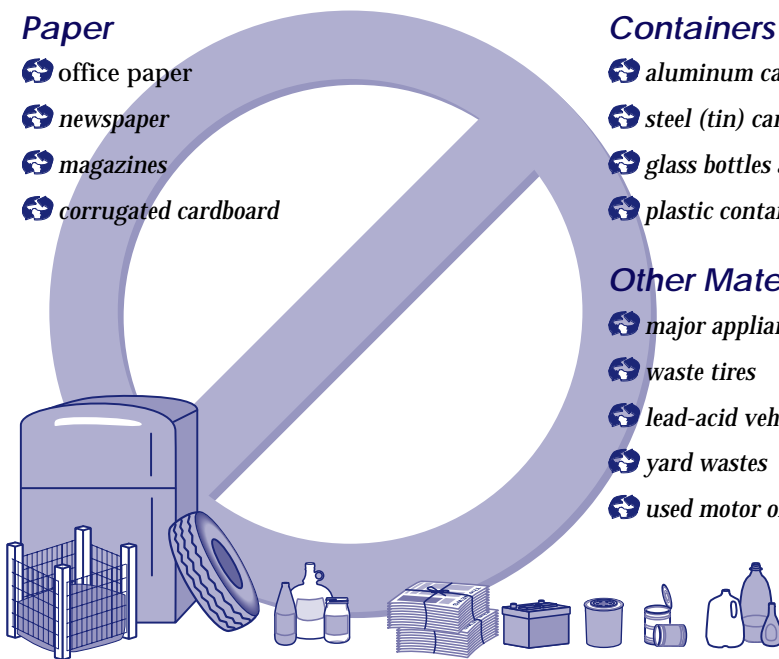
- office paper
- newspaper
- magazines
- corrugated cardboard

#### Containers

- aluminum cans
- steel (tin) cans
- glass bottles and jars
- plastic containers (#1 and #2)\*\*

#### Other Materials

- major appliances
- waste tires
- lead-acid vehicle batteries
- yard wastes
- used motor oil



\* You can order a summary of the recycling law by calling 608/266-2111 and asking for publication WA-422 Solid Waste Recycling and Waste Reduction in Wisconsin.

\*\* Current law offers a variance to plastics labeled #3 - #7. Check with your Responsible Unit to find out if this variance applies to your business.

# Designing Your Recycling and Waste Reduction Program

A successful program is dependent on effective planning, implementation and evaluation. Don't expect to create a wide range of recycling and waste reduction initiatives at once. Start with the biggest payoffs and find out what works. Then, once you have gained experience in this area, tackle other opportunities.

## 1. Commit to Recycling and Waste Reduction

A recycling and waste reduction program will be more successful if all employees become involved. All staff — managers, cashiers, maintenance staff, and stockers — need to incorporate recycling and waste reduction activities into their jobs. Maintaining recycling stations and eliminating wasteful packaging with suppliers should be as routine as stocking shelves and ordering new inventory. 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.

## 2. Understand Your Waste

Identify what waste is generated at your store before developing your program. This ensures you only spend money on equipment necessary to meet your recycling needs.

- Look through all your trash bins for several weeks throughout the year. List the types (newspaper, cans, bottles, cardboard, plastic, and trash) and weights of items customers and staff throw away.
- If your store has recycling bins available to customers, see if they are regularly contaminated with other trash. If so, determine why and correct the problem.
- Review your garbage collection contract. Record information about the frequency of waste pickups, the size of your dumpsters and waste bins, the cost of your waste contract, and any other services offered by your hauler.



## 3. Redesign Your Recycling Collection System

Work with your waste hauler to establish a collection process and pickup schedule based on the recyclables generated at your store. New collection bin features help prevent contamination of recyclables (see “Keeping Your Recyclables Clean”), and are relatively inexpensive. Buy only the bins you need, and make sure they are useful to customers and staff. When you install your bins, educate customers and staff so they know how to use them.

## 4. Reduce Waste and Recycle Inside Your Store

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. Additionally, by purchasing recycled content products you help “close the loop” of recycling. Use these products in the store and offer them for sale to customers. All the paper, cans, cardboard, and bottles you recycle need to go somewhere!

Here are some ways to save time and money while reducing waste:

- Request that vendors package their products in 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. Allow customers to refill the mug at a discount.
- Purchase products made from recycled materials. For example, antifatigue mats made from recycled tires and paper products (napkins, paper towels, toilet paper) made from post-consumer recycled paper are available. Contact the Buy Recycled Business Alliance for a list of recycled content products and vendors. (See resources on back for contact information.)
- Use cloth towels instead of paper in rest rooms.
- Purchase multipurpose, concentrated cleaning supplies, rather than job-specific, ready-to-use ones. Use the least toxic cleaner available and appropriate for your needs.
- Refill condiment bottles from bulk containers.
- Minimize use of trash bags. Manually compact the trash in your garbage bins as completely as possible and empty the bins only when full.
- Donate or compost excess food products instead of throwing them 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.

- Convert surrounding grounds from lawns to a wild flower garden. This reduces yard maintenance and labor expenses.
- Remove your business' name from unwanted subscription and mailing lists by calling the 800 numbers on catalogs, or send your name and your business' name to: Mail Preferences Services, Direct Mail Marketing Association, PO Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735.

## 5. Evaluate and Improve Your Program

- Work with your waste hauler to keep track of the volume and type of recyclables collected from your store. Also, look at your internal operations to measure the impacts of various waste reduction initiatives.
- Determine if there are contamination problems with your recycling collection, and work to correct them.
- Solicit feedback and recommendations on your recycling program from employees. Incorporate their suggestions into changes in the program. Also, reeducate staff every six months to keep them up-to-date with your progress.
- Evaluate the financial impacts of waste reduction and recycling programs. For each initiative, determine its cost to develop, savings from reduced waste, and new revenues resulting from the sale of recyclables. If you are not getting a good return on your investment, understand why before abandoning the program.
- Track customer and employee response to your initiatives to reveal if such activities have improved customer service and employee morale.

## Why Recycle and Reduce Waste?

**To comply with the law:** If your store currently has a trash bin available to customers, it must also provide recycling bins to collect all banned materials generated at your facility. Recyclables generated by employees and the store must be collected for recycling, too.

**To save resources:** Minimizing wasteful activities and making new products out of recycled materials reduces the need to extract natural resources.

**To preserve natural areas:** Recycling and waste reduction help minimize trash generation. This delays the need to convert natural spaces into landfills.

**To reduce costs:** Recycling often lowers disposal fees. Waste reduction activities can reduce purchasing and handling costs.

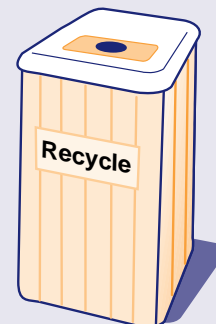
**To increase customer service:** A recent survey indicates over 95% of Wisconsin citizens recycle regularly. People now expect to find recycling containers wherever they travel. Offering recycling is yet another way to better serve your customers.

## Keeping Your Recyclables Clean



Travelers and shoppers who frequent convenience stores may find your recycling bins are 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.

1. Use a different lid color for recycling bins (blue) than for trash bin lids (brown).
2. Post a "Recyclables Only!/ No Trash!" sign on recycling bins, or "If you don't know -Don't throw!"
3. 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.
4. Place recycling bins in a location where it is easy for you and your waste hauler to maintain. Keep in mind that keeping recyclables clean is very important to ensure proper management. Try placing bins in a separate location from trash barrels. This way only dedicated recyclers will contribute to your bins, keeping the commodity separate from trash.
5. Educate customers about recycling and waste reduction with signs and posters at the filling areas, near the bins, and inside the stores.



# Resources

## Waste reduction/recycling/ pollution prevention assistance

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources** — Refer to “Waste Reduction and Recycling, People to Contact in Wisconsin” on the DNR web site: [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/contacts/recycle.htm](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/contacts/recycle.htm), or contact the Business Sector Specialists or waste management staff at these DNR offices:

Eau Claire 715-839-3700  
Green Bay 920-492-5916  
Madison 608-275-3266  
Milwaukee 414-263-8500  
Rhinelander 715-365-8900  
Spooner 715-635-2101  
Wausau 715-359-4522



**WasteCap Wisconsin** — A public-private partnership that offers site visits, seminars, and technical assistance to Wisconsin businesses. Change contact info to: (414)961-1100, web: [www.wastecapwi.org](http://www.wastecapwi.org), email: [wastecap@wastecapwi.org](mailto:wastecap@wastecapwi.org)

**Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin** — A nonprofit association of government representatives, recycling services, businesses, and individuals. Contact: (608)745-0900, web: [www.arowonline.org](http://www.arowonline.org), email: [arow@palacenet.net](mailto:arow@palacenet.net).

**Buy Recycled Business Alliance** — A broad-based group of businesses and organizations committed to promoting the purchasing of recycled-content products. A good source of products for your business. Contact: (414)453-1077, web: [www.buyrecycled.org/](http://www.buyrecycled.org/) or [brba.nrc-recycle.org/](http://brba.nrc-recycle.org/).

**Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center** — Provides education and technical assistance to businesses on waste reduction, recycling, and pollution prevention. Contact: (608) 262-0385, [www.uwex.edu/shwec/](http://www.uwex.edu/shwec/)

### Wisconsin Association of Convenience Stores

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## Publications



For a free copy of these publications, call (608) 266-2111 or find online at: [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/publications/](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/publications/)

**Wisconsin Recycling Markets Directory**—A detailed listing of a wide variety of recycling contractors and haulers located throughout the state.

**Business Waste Reduction and Recycling: A Guide for the Workplace**—A guide to help businesses design and implement a waste reduction and recycling program. PUB CE-278 2001

**Recycling and Waste Reduction in the Restaurant Industry**—A four-page fact sheet with helpful insights for stores offering prepared food services to customers. PUB CE-282 2001

**Greening the Lodging Industry**—A fact sheet containing case studies and helpful waste reduction hints for owners and managers. PUB CE-279 2001

**Special Events: Recycling and Waste Management**—A four page fact sheet designed for special events and festival planners. PUB-CE-281 2001

## Grant Information

**DNR Waste Reduction and Recycling Demonstration Grants**—If your store is planning to demonstrate an innovative recycling or waste reduction idea, you can apply for a grant, covering up to 50 percent of the project cost. Contact: (608) 266-7555.

**Recycling Market Development Board**—Funds projects through grants, loans, and rebates to expand the market demand for recyclable materials. Contact: (608)261-7711.



PUB CE-280 2001

*The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.*

*This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audio tape etc.) upon request. Please call 608/266-2111 for more information.*