

WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

In a perfect world a business would not produce any waste. One hundred percent of all raw material inputs would leave the production floor or office as a product. Very few, if any businesses ever achieve this 100% product goal, therefore a sound waste management strategy is needed to minimize the cost and liability associated with the management of waste materials. This guide serves as an introduction to processes that can have positive effects upon a business' bottom line. A management strategy should focus on efforts to reduce or recycle waste rather than to continue to rely on disposal.

Waste Audits

Waste services are often referred to as "overhead costs", but a closer look at waste generation often reveals that waste is generated by very specific activities. A waste audit is the first step that identifies what materials are leaving your facility as waste. An audit will enable your business to gain an understanding of the types and quantities of waste being generated. It is wise to not only understand what wastes are generated daily, but also to identify wastes that are generated on a less frequent basis.

Waste Reduction

The waste audit you performed can lead in to this next step. The best way to manage a waste stream is to eliminate or reduce the amount of waste being produced. Waste reduction often results in a better use of the resources and materials. This can lead to cost savings and greater productivity.

Waste reduction can be accomplished in different ways. Identifying particular activities or locations where waste is created can lead to changes that reduce waste. Here are a few examples of common waste reducing activities.

- ⇒ Work with suppliers to reduce or reuse packaging and shipping materials.
- ⇒ Eliminate the practice of printing out e-mail messages; move towards a paperless office.
- ⇒ Use printers and copiers that print on both sides of paper.

Waste Management Practices

After you have accumulated a summary of the waste that is being produced by your business and have implemented waste reduction measures, the fate of the remaining waste material should be determined. In general, waste falls into one of four management categories: 1) Recycling, 2) Hazardous Waste, 3) Solid Waste Disposal, and 4) Document Destruction.

Recycling

Setting up a recycling program for your business generally requires three steps.

- Determine which materials you are going to recycle (based upon existing markets for materials and state and local laws)
- Set up a collection system
- Educate employees on proper procedures, include along with training for other business procedures

Note: Education efforts are key to the success of a recycling program. Employees at all levels must participate. It may also be necessary to train outside contractors, such as janitorial staff, on proper recycling procedures at your facility.

An effective recycling program maximizes the recovery of waste materials for recycling. Wisconsin's recycling law is summarized in a DNR publication "Wisconsin Waste Reduction and Recycling Program" and can be downloaded from the Wisconsin DNR publication website at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/publications/recycle/LawBrochure.pdf. In addition to the materials listed in the DNR brochure you may find local recyclers who accept additional materials for recycling.



Recycled materials have a value. The value of paper, cardboard or containers may offset collection and sorting costs. Some recycling companies offer revenue sharing for the recovered materials they handle. Consider including a revenue sharing provision in your recycling service agreement.

Document/Product Destruction

Protecting sensitive information has become a priority for many businesses. There are many service providers that ensure the confidential destruction of paper documents, computer disks, and off-spec product. The type of services available in your area may vary. Some services provide on-site shredding while others may require you to deliver the materials to their location.

Solid Waste

In Wisconsin the predominant form of solid waste disposal is landfilling. Disposal options range from self-hauling waste to a landfill to contracting directly with a hauler for collection and disposal services. Many variables affect the level of service a business needs -- the volume of waste generated; space available for collection containers, and the composition of the waste (readily decomposes, odor) all impact container size and collection frequency. Efforts your business makes to reduce or recycle waste should reduce your disposal costs. If your hauler does not lower this fee be sure to ask why.

Hazardous Waste

How much hazardous waste your business produces affects the manner in which you manage the hazardous waste that is generated. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines three categories of hazardous waste generators based upon the quantity of hazardous waste generated per month.

1. Very Small Quantity Generators – Generate less than 220 lbs (100kg) per month.
2. Small Quantity Generators – Generate between 220 lbs (100kg) and 2200 lbs (1000kg) per month.
3. Large Quantity Generators – Generate more than 2200 lbs (1000kg) per month

VSQG Programs

If your facility qualifies as a Very Small Quantity Generator, some unique management options exist that can help to reduce costs to manage the Hazardous Waste your business produces. (See the VSQG publication referenced at the end of this factsheet.)

Universal Waste

Universal Wastes are those that ordinarily are categorized as Hazardous Waste, but, when managed as a recyclable material, no longer require certain procedures. Wisconsin has designated categories for Universal Wastes

- ⇒ Hazardous Waste Batteries
- ⇒ Pesticides
- ⇒ Containers of mercury
- ⇒ Sealed mercury containing devices
- ⇒ Lamps
- ⇒ Antifreeze

In order to gain a better understanding of the requirements your business may need to follow contact the DNR Hazardous Waste Specialist for your county. A listing of contacts by county can be found at: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/contacts/hazard.htm.

CONTRACTING FOR SERVICES

Contracting with a service provider can be a difficult task. There may be few contractors who will be able to serve all of your business's needs. Use the information you gathered in the waste audit to serve as a guide to identify the services you need. Below are some key questions that will help you in your search for a service provider.

- ⇒ What wastes must be treated as hazardous waste?
- ⇒ What is the volume and type of materials to be recycled?
- ⇒ What is the volume of material remaining to be disposed of as solid waste?
- ⇒ What space is available for storage of waste materials?
- ⇒ Are there any special needs regarding the frequency of pick-up? (i.e. is the waste readily decomposable?)

The next step is to write a Request for Proposals (RFP), which provides information to potential vendors including:

- A brief description of the facility -- include the location of waste and recycling storage containers.
- Volume of each material you generate each day, week, or month.
- Times and frequency you expect the wastes to be collected (i.e. before 9am, three nights a week, etc.).
- Equipment you have or may need (i.e. bins, baler, compactor).
- Length of contract and any special provisions.
- Additional requirements needed by the contractor (i.e. insurance information, waste licenses, etc.).
- Provisions you would normally include with other service contracts.
- A request for a list of references.



As part of the RFP process, you may offer to make an appointment to show any contractor your facility and set a deadline of 3-4 weeks for responses. Some key questions to consider include:

- Do you want to split services between more than one service provider? You may want to utilize a contractor who specializes in a particular service to attain the highest value.
- Does the vendor share the revenue generated from the sale of recyclables?
- Where does each waste stream go?
- Is there an easy "opt out" clause or ability to renegotiate the contract based upon changing business conditions?

Include as many potential contractors as possible in your RFP. If none of the proposals you receive is satisfactory, pick one or two top proposers and negotiate with them to improve pricing or the level of services.

Finally, remember your business is responsible to ensure the waste being generated is handled in an environmentally sound manner. It is a business' duty to ensure contractors are fulfilling the scope of services outlined in service contracts. Choose contractors that will minimize your business' exposure to liability from the disposal of waste.

Additional Resources for Businesses Available Online:

Small Business Waste Reduction Guide

www.uwex.edu/shwec/LIEBL/SBDC%20Guidebook.pdf

Very Small Quantity Generators (VSQG) of Hazardous Waste

www.uwex.edu/shwec/Pubs/pdf/720bb9612.pdf

Business Purchase of Recycled Products – Opportunities and Assistance in Wisconsin

www.uwex.edu/shwec/Pubs/pdf/Business_Pur.pdf

A Guide to Wisconsin Environmental Regulation, The Basics

www.uwex.edu/shwec/Pubs/pdf/thebasics2.pdf

Environmental Management Systems for Small and Medium Sized Businesses New 3/2005

www.uwex.edu/shwec/factsheets/Small Business EMS FS.pdf

Wisconsin DNR Publications: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/publications/

Publication by Joe Van Rossum, Recycling Specialist; Edited by Cathleen Condon, SHWEC Program Assistant

For further information contact:

Green Bay
University of Wisconsin
2420 Nicolet Drive, MAC212
Green Bay WI 54311
920.465.2278 tel
920.465.2376 fax

Madison
UW Extension
610 Langdon Street, Room 528
Madison WI 53703
608.262.0385 tel
608.262.6250 fax

Milwaukee
UWM UW-Extension
161 West Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 6000
Milwaukee WI 53202
414.227.3160 tel
414.227.3165 fax

Stevens Point
University of Wisconsin
College of Natural Resources
Stevens Point WI 54481
715.346.2793 tel
715.346.3624 fax

University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating.
UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA