



WASTE REDUCTION BASICS

The purpose of waste reduction is to decrease the amount of solid waste being sent to landfills and to work towards the ultimate goal of Zero Waste. Waste reduction is achieved through waste prevention and recycling.

WASTE PREVENTION

Waste prevention is defined as the manufacturing and/or purchasing of materials and products specifically designed to reduce the amount of solid waste generated. Products designed for waste prevention tend to last longer, use fewer materials in their production and are more easily recycled. The ultimate goal of waste prevention is zero waste, or not producing waste at all.

The environmental benefits of a waste prevention program include extended landfill capacity, less pollution entering the environment and conservation of natural resources.

There are economic benefits as well. A waste prevention program can result in substantial savings through reduced purchasing costs, the development of more efficient procedures, reduced energy consumption and reduced disposal costs.

WASTE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The minimal use or greater reuse of packaging: Packaging is a major source of waste in our consumer-based society. Manufacturers can reduce waste by designing for minimum packaging or using packaging materials that are more easily recyclable. While products need to be protected during shipping, materials such as boxes, pallets and packing materials designed for reuse can substantially reduce costs and waste.

Use durable equipment and supplies: Using quality, long-lasting equipment that can be serviced and reused rather than discarded minimizes waste. This practice supports quality manufacturers. Higher initial costs are often justified by lower replacement and disposal costs as equipment is in use for a longer period. Cost savings may also be realized by renting, leasing or sharing needed equipment with other organizations or individuals.

Utilize reusable products rather than single-use items: Simple measures such as reusing ceramic mugs instead of using disposable cups, using cloth shopping bags rather than disposable plastic ones, using rechargeable batteries or reusing items such as file folders and interoffice envelopes mean less waste and lower costs.

Using materials more efficiently: Policies that reduce waste and conserve materials can be as simple as switching to double-sided photocopying. This can cut paper costs by up to 40 percent.

Sell or donate used goods: Selling to or exchanging excess materials with other companies can reduce waste. Used furniture or other materials can be donated to charities. RCBC's Materials Exchange Program (MEX) can assist by facilitating the distribution of these items to other groups or companies – at no charge!

Recycling: When you purchase products keep in mind what will become of them at their end-of-life. Materials that can be fully recycled, or that are made of recycled materials mean less energy consumption in remanufacturing and less materials in the landfill.

Composting: By utilizing a backyard or worm composter you can decrease your waste output by more than 40 percent and create a rich soil booster.

RECYCLING

British Columbia does not have a province-wide curbside recycling program. Residential recycling programs are determined on a municipal or regional district level and vary between jurisdictions. As well, there are recycling opportunities available with non-governmental agencies, stewardship associations and businesses.

Recycling is often confused with reuse. Reuse refers to items, such as clothing or leftover paint, that are used for their intended purpose by a different user. Recycling is where materials are processed and then used as feedstock in the manufacturing of new products. Some examples of this are recycled-content paper, playground equipment made of crumb rubber from used tires, and aluminum beverage cans that are made from recycled aluminum cans.

RECYCLING EXAMPLES

Paper: Most paper is recyclable. Office paper is usually collected in two grades: *high grade* such as white printer paper, and *mixed* such as colored paper, folders and envelopes. Newsprint is also recyclable but is processed through a separate stream in order to apply a method of de-inking.

Corrugated cardboard: Old corrugated cardboard (know as OCC) is a large portion of the recycling stream and can be easily separated from other materials. Because of its volume, recycling cardboard can significantly reduce the amount of solid waste being produced by an individual or business.

Glass: Most glass containers are recyclable although some separation by colour (clear, green, and brown) may be required. Food containers are easily recyclable, while household drinking glasses, pyrex and windows are made in varying qualities and are generally not accepted for recycling.

Metal: Aluminum, tin or steel cans and other scrap metals are readily recyclable and most municipalities offer some form of scrap metal recycling program. Metals such as copper can yield a high price depending on market conditions.

Plastic: Recovered plastics are separated by type and identified by a numbering system ranging between one and seven. These numbers are usually displayed on the bottom of the container inside the recycling symbol (triangle of arrows). Some types of plastics are more valuable than others, some are also more easily recyclable, which can determine what plastics a municipality will collect.

Other Recyclables: Dozens of other materials, such as wood waste, textiles, electronics, batteries and drywall may also be recyclable in your area. To find a recycling centre that accepts these or other products call the RCBC Recycling Hotline.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The best way to ensure you keep up with the latest developments in waste reduction and other sustainability issues and to have your voice heard is to join RCBC. You will receive the latest RCBC publications that explore these issues and more. By being a member of RCBC, whether you are a consumer, a retailer, a recycler or a brand owner, you will become part of the made-in-BC solution that fits our province's waste management objectives as we work together for a sustainable future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ministry of Environment: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/epdpa/ips/index.html>

RCBC: www.rcbc.bc.ca

OR CALL

RCBC Recycling Hotline at 604-732-9253 or 1-800-667-4321

This document was developed with the assistance of RCBC members representing consumers, industry, government and environmental perspectives.

RCBC Mission Statement

RCBC is a multi-sectoral non-profit organization promoting the principles of Zero Waste through information services, the exchange of ideas and research.

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