

# GREEN OFFICE RESOURCES

## Participants will learn:

- Tips for reducing waste in your day-to-day operations.
- How to set up a reuse system in your office and how to donate materials.
- Tips for starting or improving a recycling system in your organization.
- How to purchase greener products and supplies.

## Why is Greening Your Office Important?

When your organization begins to educate others about environmental issues, you may also want to look at internal operations and make changes to improve your group's environmental performance. The following tips and resources can help you implement these changes.



*To increase recycling, label your recycling and trash bins as clearly as possible. For example, place large, color-coded labels both on and above the bins that include examples of recyclable and disposable materials. It is also important to place all of your bins in the same location. People are more likely to recycle something than throw it away if the recycling bin is right next to the trash can.*

# Five Ways to Green Your Office:

## 1. REDUCE

Preventing waste from being generated in the first place is the easiest and most effective way to lower disposal costs. Look for creative ways in your day-to-day operations to reduce waste.

- Avoid unnecessary printing and make double-sided printouts and copies. Start a paper reduction campaign in your office.
- Use e-mail for communications and consider using e-newsletters to reduce paper useage.
- Check documents carefully before printing and edit drafts on the computer.
- Reuse scrap paper for notepads.
- Use a small fax transmission sticker instead of using a large cover sheet.



- Use reusable cups and dishware for meetings. Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable coffee mug.
- Encourage employees to pack lunches in reusable containers. Providing a microwave, refrigerator, and an area for dishwashing and dishware will make this easier for staff.
- Use non-hazardous or less-hazardous cleaning supplies.

## 2. REUSE

- Set up a system in your office for reusing office supplies and equipment, such as a central storage area or online database.
- Consider donating office equipment and materials that your business no longer needs. Go to [RethinkRecycling.com/businesses](http://RethinkRecycling.com/businesses) and look under donation opportunities for options.
- When shipping items, reuse packaging materials or use shredded paper.
- Use reusable name tags at meetings.

# Five Ways to Green Your Office

## 3. RECYCLE

- Make sure your organization is recycling as much as possible. Office paper, newspapers, magazines, cardboard, plastic bottles, metal cans, and glass are all recyclable.
- Make sure recycling containers are clearly labeled and readily available. Check with your county to see if they have recycling labels and promotion materials available for you to use.
- To encourage recycling, eliminate trash bins in individual offices; place them in the break room and common areas instead.
- Start an organics recycling program. Organic waste (food waste and food-soiled paper) can be recycled into compost, a valuable resource used in landscaping and road construction projects. Your county may offer assistance in setting up an organics recycling program.



## 4. DEVELOP A GREEN PURCHASING PROGRAM

- Purchase environmentally-preferable office supplies and equipment. Environmentally preferable products contain recycled content, are sustainably harvested, are made with less toxic materials, or conserve energy or water. Learn more at [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us), search "eppg".
- Purchase printers with double-sided printing capabilities.
- Purchase refillable toner cartridges.
- Buy office supplies in bulk.
- Purchase recycled-content office paper. Set a standard for recycled-content paper used in your organization.
- Encourage suppliers to ship materials in returnable or reusable containers.
- If you're providing food at your organization, purchase locally grown, in-season, organic food when possible. Also buy non-perishable food in bulk. If you're hiring a caterer, choose one that purchases locally grown and/or organic food.

## 5. KEEP HAZARDOUS MATERIALS OUT OF THE TRASH

Certain supplies and products that may be used in your business, such as electronics, cleaners, fluorescent light bulbs, appliances, cleaning supplies, and paint contain hazardous or toxic materials and must not be placed in the trash. Check with your county for information on the business hazardous waste program in your area.

# Where to Get More Information

## Print Resources:

- **From the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency**

—Reducing Waste in the Workplace\*

Request literature by e-mail: [resourcecenter.pca@state.mn.us](mailto:resourcecenter.pca@state.mn.us) or call 651-757-2120. PDF versions can also be downloaded from [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us) and search “resource center”.

- **From Ramsey County**

—Green Your Meetings [www.co.ramsey.mn.us](http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us) and search “green meetings”.

\*Attached at the end of this Toolkit.

## Online Resources:

- **RethinkRecycling.com**

Information for businesses, schools, and organizations, including a step-by-step guide to help you develop and maintain a waste management program.

[Business Recycling Guide](#)  
[Event Planning](#)

- **Minnesota Materials Exchange**

This free service connects businesses and organizations that have quality reusable goods they no longer need to those that can use them. Find low-cost or free materials, save money on disposal, and find new markets for surplus materials.

- **Minnesota’s Sustainable Healthy Schools Program**

Resources for parents and educators including a “Guide for Change,” “Assessment Tool for Change,” and success stories.

- **Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP)**

A free, non-regulatory program that provides businesses and organizations with company-specific, cost-saving solutions to manage waste and improve energy efficiency.

- **Minnesota Retiree Environmental Technical Assistance Program (ReTAP)**

ReTAP employs skilled, retired professionals to provide free, confidential, non-regulatory pollution prevention, waste reduction, and energy conservation assistance to Minnesota businesses, industries and institutions.

- **Minnesota Waste Wise**

A private, non-profit, member-supported organization affiliated with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce that helps businesses and organizations reduce waste and save money.

- **United States Environmental Protection Agency**

[Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Information](#)



# Green Your Meetings



Meetings may not seem like a threat to the environment, but their impacts can add up. Planning ahead is key! Disposable coffee cups, excess paper, and even refreshment selections can have an effect on the environment. From staff meetings to conferences, learn how you can go greener at your next meeting.

Incorporate the following tips that are feasible for you. Every action helps!

## TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR MEETING

- > Search for a venue that is centrally located, provides recycling for paper, cans and bottles, and provides video or phone conferencing options. Offer information on bus and bike routes near the location, and don't forget about bike racks. Also, encourage attendees to carpool.
- > There are multiple ways to reduce paper. In place of handouts, use a laptop and projector to project all meeting materials. Make meeting materials available electronically, and in print by special request. Ask if the venue has a SMART board or white board.
- > If meeting materials must be printed, print double-sided on a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled paper.
- > Ask presenters not to bring copies of their presentation, but to offer them electronically.
- > Provide recycled paper name tags or reusable name badges.

**RETHINK  
RECYCLING.**

[RethinkRecycling.com/event-planning](http://RethinkRecycling.com/event-planning)

Visit our website for more ideas on greening up your meetings.



## TIPS FOR INCLUDING FOOD AT YOUR MEETING

- > Serve beverages in reusable cups or recyclable containers. Consider using tap water instead of bottled water. Provide reusable or compostable plates and flatware, as well as cloth napkins and tablecloths. And, if possible supply washable mugs or cups for beverages.
- > Provide attendees with a reusable cup or ask attendees to bring their own reusable cup.
- > Planning is key. Try to choose locally grown food, or if using a caterer, ask if they use local ingredients. When in season, purchase fresh produce from a farmer's market. If providing coffee, look for fair trade or shade-grown brands.
- > Use bulk dispensers for condiments. For example, provide a sugar dispenser instead of individual packets.
- > Clearly mark containers for items that you are collecting like recycling, food composting and food-to-livestock collection. If you are composting, ask before the meeting if someone is willing to compost the fruit and vegetable scraps in their own backyard bin. If you have leftover food, offer it to attendees or contact local shelters or food kitchens to learn about donation opportunities.
- > Share information with attendees on efforts to make the meeting green and how they can help. Encourage them to plan their own green meetings, as well as office and family celebrations.