

# RECYCLING IN OFFICE BUILDINGS

CITY OF HARRISBURG  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

To establish a successful recycling program in your office or office building, you need to determine what kind of program will work in your facility. You should first analyze your options. For example, would a mixed paper program be preferable to a white paper/newspaper/cardboard program? Knowing your facility will help you to decide which program best suits your needs. Below are some recommendations to assist you.

It should be noted that if you manage office buildings with multiple tenants, you are responsible for providing tenants with an opportunity to recycle. Tenants must be informed of their responsibilities and your waste management system must accommodate recycling.

## The Requirements

The Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act of 1988 (Act 101) requires commercial, institutional and municipal establishments located in Pennsylvania's mandated municipalities to recycle high-grade office paper, corrugated paper, aluminum and leaf waste. In addition, establishments must recycle any other materials included in the municipality's recycling ordinance or regulations, which may include glass, newsprint, plastics, and/or steel and bimetallic cans. As a mandated municipality, businesses and institutions with facilities located within the City of Harrisburg must implement recycling programs.

The City of Harrisburg's recycling requirements are as follows:

- All commercial, institutional and municipal establishments must source separate the following materials:
  - High grade office paper
  - Corrugated cardboard
  - Glass containers
  - Aluminum cans
  - Any other recyclables that may be designated by the City
- Those served by the City's curbside program must set their materials at the curb in the City's blue recycling bins for collection.
- Those not served by the City's curbside program must arrange for the collection and recycling of all designated materials.
- All commercial, institutional and municipal entities must provide written documentation as to the type and weight of materials recycled annually. Reports are due to the City by January 15 of each year on a form provided by the City.



## Facts About Office Paper

As much as 93% of all office waste is paper, most of it recyclable. As noted above, recycling of high grade office paper and corrugated cardboard is required in commercial establishments located in mandated municipalities in Pennsylvania.

- 77% of paper waste generated in offices is recyclable.
- Typical business offices generate about 1.5 pounds of waste paper per employee each day. Financial businesses generate more than two pounds per employee daily.



## Recycling Works

CITY OF HARRISBURG  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC WORKS

1690 S. 19th Street  
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- Nearly half of typical office paper waste is high grade office paper.
- It is possible to achieve significant reduction in the cost of buying office paper by reducing paper use and reusing paper where possible.
- Eliminating office paper from your waste may reduce your waste bill by as much as 50%.
- Recycling one ton of paper typically saves about 6.7 cubic yards of landfill space. A cubic yard of stacked office paper weighs about 380 pounds. Cost savings may be estimated by multiplying the tons recycled by 6.7 times the cost per cubic yard for waste disposal (if by volume) or by cost per ton (if by weight).



Commercial and residential paper waste accounts for more than 40% of waste being landfilled. Eliminating this paper from our waste would nearly double the lives of current landfills.

## Steps for Successful Recycling in Offices and Office Buildings

Almost all types of paper used in the office can be recycled. It can be separated into various grades ranging from high to low. High-grade papers generally include but are not limited to white computer paper, bond, letterhead, and ledger. Lower grades may include mixed grades, file stock, ground wood papers, newsprint, and colored paper. Corrugated cardboard must also be recycled, but it is nearly always managed separately from all other paper.



Mixed paper is generally considered low grade even if it contains high-grade paper. Easily identifiable high-grade papers (such as computer printout) should be kept separate if possible to take advantage of its higher market value.

While most of the recycling stream in offices will be paper, businesses and institutions in Harrisburg must also recycle aluminum cans and glass bottles, and these materials must be taken into account when planning a program.

1. Perform a waste assessment. Walk through your office or office building noting what type of waste is discarded in each area. A walk-through will help you determine which types of containers are needed. Typical programs are likely to involve some of the following:
  - **Administrative and office areas** - office paper, corrugated cardboard, other paper, cans, bottles, toner cartridges.
  - **Food service areas** - glass, metal, cans, plastic containers, corrugated cardboard (make sure that food waste is separated from recyclables).
  - **Public areas** - newspaper, magazines, bottles, cans.
2. Based on the results of the waste assessment, set up appropriate recycling programs in each area
3. Placement of containers in offices is critical, and space is often an issue. Containers should be close enough to where the waste is discarded so that people will be convenient to use, but not so widespread that they cause clutter. It is a good idea to discuss with employees who work in a particular area where containers should be placed to facilitate their use.
4. Make sure that all containers are well-marked. For public areas, it is best to choose containers with specialized openings, such as a hole for cans or a slot for newspapers. It is also important to place containers where the materials are generated to make recycling convenient.
5. Inform employees about proper recycling procedures. Issue a memo, throw a kick-off party and explain any separation procedures when you distribute containers. Make sure to follow up to ensure that procedures are being followed and further educate employees as necessary.



6. Set up a log book or a receipt system to record the volume of recyclables leaving the premises. This will enable you to receive proper compensation for your materials and to take appropriate action if volumes decrease.
7. Include recycling information in your orientation for new employees.
8. After policies have been established, explain the recycling program to your custodial staff. Train them by showing them what to do with new containers, how to collect waste separately and where to take separated materials. For a 24-hour operation, plan pick-ups on appropriate shifts so that you do not have a problem with overflowing containers.
9. Ask for assistance from your custodial staff in monitoring the program. Have them inform you of areas with major contamination problems or where employees are not participating, and follow up with improved recycling education in these areas.
10. If appropriate, make sure that your grounds crew knows to keep yard waste separate from other waste.
11. Ask your waste hauler for advice about keeping recyclables and wet waste separate. Depending on the company's trucks and equipment, your hauler may want to give you separate containers for trash and recyclables.
12. Remind employees to keep food waste out of recycling containers and trash. Food waste should be handled separately from trash and recyclables.



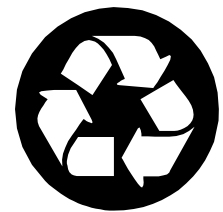
### For further information...

The following fact sheets are available from the City of Harrisburg's Department of Public Works:

Recycling at Work: Information for Harrisburg Businesses and Institutions	
Developing a Recycling Program at Work	Recycling in Manufacturing & Warehouse Operations
Conducting a Waste Assessment	Recycling in Retail Operations
Recycling in Hospitals & Health Care Institutions	Recycling in Restaurants and Taverns
Recycling in Hotels & Motels	Recycling in Schools, Colleges and Universities
Helping to Solve Solid Waste Problems in Your Business or Institution	
Recycling in Apartments & Condominiums	Recycling at Outdoor & Special Events

To obtain one or more of these fact sheets, contact:

City of Harrisburg	(717) 236-4802
Department of Public Works	Fax (717) 236-9051
1690 S. 19 <sup>th</sup> Street	
Harrisburg, PA 17104	



For more detailed information about implementing a waste reduction and recycling program in your workplace:

Visit the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection website at [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us), click on the "Recycling Works" logo, and go to "Commercial Recycling."

The Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania (PROP) has published "Developing a Waste Reduction and Recycling Program for Commercial, Institutional, Industrial and Municipal Establishments." To obtain a copy, contact PROP at:

P.O. Box 25  
 Bellwood, PA 16617  
 (814) 742-7777  
 Fax (814) 742-8838  
 e-mail [prop@epix.net](mailto:prop@epix.net)  
[www.proprecycles.org](http://www.proprecycles.org)