

Prevent & Save

Best Practice Guidelines in Waste Management



Grocery Retailers



QUANTIFIABLE TONNES OF PACKAGING WASTE

The most important aspect of waste management is having access to comprehensive data on the processing and collection of your waste. Your recovery operator should be supplying you with a breakdown (by material and volume) of all the waste which is being collected from your business.

This means that you are aware of:

1. What you are paying for when you budget for your waste collection,
2. Areas where waste or overuse may be occurring and
3. Areas where you may make a saving.

STAFF INVOLVEMENT – A VITAL INGREDIENT

Retailers with the most successful track records with regard to waste management have a 'project champion' in place. This person has responsibility for staff training on waste management, monitoring collections by the recovery operator, and putting initiatives in place to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. This waste type is the most expensive to have collected, so it makes good business sense to have somebody responsible for minimising landfill waste as much as possible.

Typical initiatives where project champions have been successful are:

- Monitoring the waste types, weights and costs to recovery operators
- Training of staff (new and existing) on best practice in waste management
- Signage of collection points and storage points for waste
- Cleanliness of waste management areas
- Initiation of projects to reduce weights and increase recycling
- Liaison with suppliers with regard to waste minimisation
- Introduction and monitoring of re-use systems
- Tapping into benchmarking and experience from other stores
- Periodic reviews on cost and effectiveness with main recovery operator

Some businesses have found it beneficial to implement a 'Green Team' where a number of staff from the business monitor the success of initiatives implemented and liaise with others to find new ideas on waste reduction or minimisation, through regular meetings. The outcomes of these initiatives and approved ideas are communicated to management for appropriate attention.



RECOVERY OPERATOR INVOLVEMENT

Your local recovery operator has the most knowledge and experience of what materials can be recycled in your business. If you have any queries about what can be recycled, or what condition the material needs to be in before it can be recycled, your local recovery operator will know. If you need more than one opinion, you can always use the Recycling Services area on the Repak web-site to find the local recovery operators in your area. The following link brings you to the Repak web-site.

http://www.repak.ie/recovery_operators.html

SEGREGATION IS KEY

Waste streaming is a highly effective way of reducing waste and controlling your waste costs. As a minimum, all clean paper/cardboard and plastic types should be separated from other types of waste so that they can be recycled rather than landfilled. This means that there must be clearly marked and weatherproofed areas or bins to place paper/cardboard, plastics and general waste wherever this waste is produced and near to the areas where people are working.

There may also be opportunities to recover food waste for composting. Again, your local recovery operator can assist you with the best ways of separating this waste and presenting it for recovery.



Clear plastic bags
to collect waste



colour coded bins to collect
segregated waste

To assist with segregation of waste, the following guidelines may be useful:

- Colour code different types of waste e.g.
 - GREEN = Paper / Cardboard
 - BLUE = Plastics
 - BROWN = Food waste for composting
 - BLACK = General mixed waste
- Collect in clear plastic bags to ensure that the waste is segregated correctly
- Use photographs as well as text to help employees who may have difficulty reading

All new staff should be fully briefed on the benefits of segregation, the use of these areas or bins and also be aware of the business' environmental policies.

PREPARATION OF WASTE FOR COLLECTION AND RECYCLING

Always ensure that areas of the business that are used for collection of waste are kept tidy and that each area or bin is clearly marked.

If applicable, investigate the use of balers and compactors to compress your waste. Paper/ cardboard bales and plastic bales are a very effective way of reducing the storage space required for this waste and reducing the transport costs associated with it, as baled waste takes up much less volume. Compactors can also reduce the space required to store food waste or mixed waste, but a business would need to be producing a substantial amount of this waste before a compactor could be justified.

Under no circumstances should the use of open skips be allowed on your site.

Open skips quickly become filled with recyclable material, compostable material and general waste in an uncontrolled way. It is also the most expensive way of dealing with waste.



Weatherproof
Balers



Baled cardboard
awaiting collection

Balers and compactors are available in different sizes and combinations (e.g. a twin chamber baler), and can be leased, rented or bought outright. Your recovery operator may be able to work with you on the best solution to recycle your waste, as clean, segregated, baled (or compacted) waste material will attract a higher value, as opposed to low value unprocessed waste. The higher the value you can attract on your waste material, the quicker the payback period on any equipment you have acquired.

OTHER REUSE, RECYCLING

There may be opportunities to reuse or recycle material in your business that is not collected by a recovery operator. For example:

- Allow customers to use cardboard boxes from deliveries to take their groceries home. Robust fruit boxes are ideal for this.
- Allow staff or customers to take away used plastic flower containers, mushroom punnets etc. for their own use. These are particularly good for farmers, gardeners, etc.
- Offer wooden crates or broken pallets be used for wood chip or firewood.
- Print internal documents on both sides of a page.
- Reuse envelopes for internal staff documents.

These types of opportunities come from working with staff, customers and other businesses in your area to see what can be re-used or recycled. Not only will anything recycled in this way save you having to pay charges to a recovery operator, it may even earn some money for you.

REDUCTION

For a small business, it can be quite difficult to reduce the amount of packaging you use as you rely on your suppliers for the packaging delivered to you, and generally do not have control over the design of this packaging.

However, there are a number of initiatives you can undertake. Initially, you can communicate to staff and customers that you strive to use the least amount of packaging on your products and seek opportunities to reduce the level of packaging used wherever possible. This could be done in a packaging policy, or at a simpler level in a staff training booklet. Secondly, you could write a letter to your suppliers informing them of this initiative, and asking them to confirm that they have made all efforts to minimise the amount of packaging they use on their products.

Packaging re-use systems are becoming more popular among retailers and local suppliers. These reduce the amount of packaging that a retailer has to manage once the product is delivered. Some examples are:

- Bakery product delivered on returnable wooden trays
- Fruit and vegetables delivered in stackable, returnable plastic trays
- Milk and dairy product delivered in returnable steel cages on wheels
- Various products delivered on returnable blue rented pallets.

You could also look for smaller projects around your business that minimises packaging. For example, buying cooking oil in bulk containers and drawing off smaller batches as required for the cooking areas, or allowing your suppliers to take back spare white pallets that you accumulate.



VOLUNTARY SYMBOL GROUPS

Members of such groups should seek support from their group management in setting up and maintaining their waste management system. It is quite likely that there are already people within the group with responsibility for preventing waste and improving recycling streams.

TO KEEP ON FILE

The following records will be useful in demonstrating improvements to your waste management systems. They will also provide the required detail if you wish to submit an application for an awards scheme such as the Repak Recycling Awards.

- Photographic evidence of any new improvements to the business
- Current and previous years records from recovery operators
- Correspondence with suppliers in relation to packaging reduction
- Green Team meeting minutes and staff suggestions
- Records of any correspondence with the Local Authority with regard to waste
- Records and photographic evidence of any work or environmental initiatives undertaken at a local level – e.g. involvement with schools etc.

FINALLY...

We hope you find this information useful, and we wish you the best success with your waste management strategy. If you have any queries with regard to the above document, please contact the Membership Services department at Repak by ringing 01 4670190 or by e-mailing info@repak.ie.