

What is Waste Reduction?

Waste reduction is an effort to decrease the amount of waste generated. The best way to reduce waste is not to create it in the first place. If waste is prevented, there is no need or cost for collection, processing, and disposal. Reducing waste is important because doing so conserves valuable natural resources and protects the environment, benefiting us, our children, and future generations. Waste reduction is the preferred method of solid waste management and goes a long way toward protecting the environment. It is also important to reuse and recycle whenever possible in the workplace. The three R's of managing solid waste (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) all play a role in your business' efforts to save money by reducing purchasing costs, as well as costs associated with the collection and disposal of excess waste.

It's Easy to Reduce Waste at Work!

Montgomery County residents and businesses generated over one million tons of waste last year. Since the most important step to reducing waste is being a thoughtful consumer, you can help to reduce the amount of waste generated in Montgomery County by changing your purchasing processes. Before purchasing an item for work, consider if the item can be reused or if there is a less wasteful alternative. Providing employees with greener options in the workplace can really make a difference and help the environment. In this brochure, you will find some simple ways to reduce the amount of waste generated in your place of business.

Key to Waste Reduction Tips on the Cover



(clockwise)

1. **Reusable lunch bags** eliminate the use of plastic and paper bags.
2. **Emails** reduce paper use.
3. **Digital storage** saves paper.
4. Use **reusable folders** for files.
5. **Reusable bottles and mugs** eliminate disposable paper and Styrofoam® cups.



Montgomery County, Maryland Division of Solid Waste Services

Waste Reduction and Recycling Section

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This information is available in an alternate format
by calling 240-777-6480.

Printed on recycled and recyclable paper.

In the Workplace

Waste Reduction Is All Around Us



Reducing Paper Usage in Your Workplace

Saving paper goes a long way in reducing waste. Montgomery County's most recent waste composition study found that 17 percent of all waste disposed of in Montgomery County includes recyclable mixed paper. Here are some great ways to reduce paper use in the first place at your workplace, desk, or in your office.

- Send emails instead of printing memos for employees to read.
- Post notices in common areas instead of printing and distributing individual copies to employees.
- Use digital storage devices such as external hard drives and flash drives to reduce the need for printing and filing paper copies.
- Use electronic, web-based forms for timesheets and invoices.
- Use file sharing systems to transfer and share information.
- Buy supplies and office products in bulk to reduce packaging.
- Use reusable plastic file folders instead of disposable paper file folders.



Reducing Waste at Meetings

You can also reduce the amount of waste generated during meetings and presentations. Reducing excess handouts and disposable food and drink items during meetings can have a significant impact on your waste reduction efforts.

- Hold conferences online or use projectors to reduce meeting handouts.
- Use dry-erase boards instead of paper easels.
- Use water filters, pitchers, and coolers instead of purchasing water in single-use plastic bottles for meetings.
- Provide reusable utensils and dishes for food served at meetings instead of disposable paper, plastic, or Styrofoam® plates, cups, and utensils.
- Distribute presentations and materials by disk or email, and use laptops or tablets to take notes.

Minimize Kitchen Waste at Work

By providing employees with reusable options in the kitchen, you can reduce the amount of waste generated at work even more. This simple action can drastically reduce disposal costs and create a cleaner working and eating space for you and your coworkers.

- Provide employees with ceramic mugs for their beverages to reduce the use of paper and Styrofoam® cups at work.
- Provide a water cooler to reduce individual single-use water bottles.
- Pack lunch in a reusable or insulated lunch bag.
- Bring food items in reusable containers that can be washed after use instead of using plastic bags or wrap.
- Use cloth napkins and hand towels instead of disposable paper products.



For more information on how to reduce waste in Montgomery County, visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling.

If You Can't Reduce, Be Sure to Recycle

Of course, not every item you buy can be reused. It's important to look for products that are recyclable or have a type of packaging that can be recycled in Montgomery County. Here are some common workplace and office items that are recyclable:

- Corrugated cardboard and paperboard boxes
- Computer and office paper, including white, colored, and shredded paper
- Magazines and catalogs, newspapers and inserts
- Envelopes with or without plastic windows
- Coated paper, including milk/juice cartons, drink boxes, and produce and frozen food boxes
- Bi-metal (steel/tin) and aluminum cans and foil products
- Empty, non-hazardous aerosol cans
- Glass bottles and jars
- Plastics including bottles, pails, jars, tubs, containers, lids, caps, and #1 PET thermoform packaging such as plastic clamshell containers, trays, deli containers, lids, domes, and cups
- Plastic durable/reusable containers and lids
- Christmas trees, grass, leaves, garden trimmings, and brush
- Scrap metal items
- Ink and toner cartridges (look for toner cartridge recycling companies that will take empty ink and toner cartridges for recycling)



Tip: Use shredded paper for packaging materials and reusable totes for storage.