

Recycling in Pennsylvania Retail Operations

Recycling at retail locations throughout Pennsylvania can make a positive impact on our environment and our local communities. Owners, operators, and shoppers, of retail locations, be they large malls, shopping centers, or individual shops, working together with their local municipality, can establish and maintain a successful recycling program.

Recycling is local in Pennsylvania - 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. Businesses and institutions with facilities located within a mandated municipality must implement recycling programs according to local requirements, those not, are encouraged to recycle.

General municipal recycling requirements are as follows:

- All commercial, institutional, and municipal establishments must source separate the following materials:
 - High grade office paper;
 - Corrugated cardboard;
 - Aluminum cans;
 - Leaf waste; and
 - Any other recyclables that may be designated by the municipality.
- These establishments 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 municipality by January 31 of each year on a form provided by the municipality.

Steps for Successful Recycling in Retail Operations

Packaging materials, particularly corrugated cardboard, make up a large portion of any retail store's waste. Because much of this waste is generated outside the retail establishment, reduction efforts must be made in cooperation with vendors.

Incoming packaging such as bags and boxes can be reused as packaging for customers. However, while this reduces disposal requirements, it does not solve the problem of unnecessary packaging. If vendors ship products in unnecessary or non-recyclable packaging, you should consider asking them to reduce packaging or switch to materials that can be recycled or reused.

Here are some hints to help in planning your recycling program:

1. Perform a waste assessment. Walk through your operation noting what type of waste is discarded in each area. A walk-through will help you determine which types of containers are needed.
2. Based on the results of the waste assessment, set up appropriate recycling programs in all areas.
3. You will probably find that most of your waste will be corrugated cardboard. To reduce volume and make storage easier, you may wish to flatten and/or bale or compact the cardboard.
4. Make sure that managers of public areas in shopping complexes are provided with containers for recycling, and that all containers, but particularly those placed in public/retail areas, 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 – the helps reduce contamination from other wastes. It is also important to place containers where the materials are generated to make recycling convenient.
5. Don't forget to post signs to tell customers that you recycle.

6. Inform employees about proper recycling procedures by issuing a memo and reviewing procedures at staff meetings or at the beginning of shifts. Make sure to follow up to ensure that procedures are being followed and further educate employees as necessary.
7. 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 change.
8. Include recycling information in your orientation for new employees.
9. After policies have been established, explain the recycling program to 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.
10. In a multiple retail facility such as a mall, there may be central staffing for waste/recycling collection. You will need to work with these personnel to ensure that materials are collected efficiently.
11. Ask for assistance from 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.
12. If appropriate, make sure that your grounds crew knows to keep yard waste separate from other waste.
13. 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.
14. Remind employees to keep food waste out of recycling containers and trash. Food waste should be handled separately from trash and recyclables.
15. Retail operations that have establishments in multiple locations need to coordinate their recycling efforts with each local municipality where they operate. Each municipality may have different recycling processes – remember all recycling is local in Pennsylvania.

Many wastes generated at retail locations can be recycled. It is important that owners, operators, and guests and the local municipality all work together to implement and maintain a recycling program at their retail establishments.

Retail Operations, hotels, offices, restaurants, schools, manufacturers, hospitals, and other establishments each generate various types and amounts of wastes and have their own unique recycling opportunities. To learn more on how different types of establishments can implement a recycling program, please refer to our other Recycling Fact Sheets available at: <http://www.depgreenport.state.pa.us/elibrary/> (select Publications and then Waste Management). Though each workplace may have differences in the waste they produce and what they can recycle, all have the capability of significantly reducing what and how much waste is disposed in our landfills. By recycling they can also save energy and reduce carbon emissions, save natural resources, and limit operational costs. It is important that we all work together with our employers and local municipalities to implement and maintain a recycling program at our places of work.

For more detailed information about recycling in Pennsylvania, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Waste Management, Recycling in Pennsylvania website at: <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Land/Waste/Recycling>.