

Recycling in Pennsylvania Restaurants and Taverns

Recycling at restaurants and taverns throughout Pennsylvania can make a positive impact on our environment and our local communities due to their large-scale resource consumption potential. Owners, operators, and guests of these establishments, working together with their local municipality, can implement and maintain a successful and impactful 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 mandated municipalities 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.

Recycling and Reuse in Restaurants and Taverns

Restaurants and taverns can reduce their waste considerably by employing both recycling and reuse. For example, restaurants that use disposable napkins, utensils, or placemats can reduce waste volume by switching to reusable items. Many restaurants and bars also generate significant quantities of glass, aluminum, steel, plastics, and corrugated cardboard. Some methods for handling of restaurant waste might include:

- Replacing beverage bottles and cans. Many beers and most soft drinks can be served on-tap, reducing both the cost of buying beverages and disposing or recycling cans and bottles. Even wine can be stored in bulk in some circumstances.
- Replacing disposable items (cups, utensils, trays, dishes, and single-serving condiment packages) with reusable items.
- For eat-in restaurants and hotels, use of reusable napkins and dinnerware, placemats, and tablecloths. Switching from disposables may add to dishwashing and laundry costs, but will save on the purchase of paper goods and avoid waste disposal costs.
- For carryout and fast food, selecting the minimum appropriate packaging for food.
- Buying in bulk to reduce container waste, but not buying too much of a product that might spoil. Buy locally to minimize transportation costs.
- Recycling of polystyrene containers, as some fast food chains are doing. Consider contacting your container supplier about the feasibility of such a project
- Asking suppliers to provide you with products that are packaged in materials such as recyclable or reusable paper, glass, steel, aluminum, or plastic.
- Donating useful, outdated stock and leftover foods to food pantries, charities, and shelters, or composting food waste.
- Collecting and sending used grease to a renderer.

Steps for Successful Recycling in Restaurants and Taverns

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 your recycling program. Some issues to consider include:

- Ensuring that recycling and trash bins look different from each other and are clearly marked. Both types of bins should be conveniently located in the kitchen and bar areas so that employees will use them.
 - Where space is an issue, researching the feasibility of investing in a mini-cardboard baler and can and plastic crushers. This equipment will allow for efficient management of space and may increase the likelihood of favorable recycling service contracts.
 - Letting your patrons know that you recycle. If your establishment is self-serve, post signs letting customers know that you are recycling and what they should do with their bottles and cans. Either put out a bin for these items, or have customers leave them on a designated counter for collection by your staff.
3. Inform employees about proper recycling procedures by issuing a memo and reviewing procedures at staff meetings or at the beginning of shifts. Take time to train employees about where to place materials. Be specific, using product names used in your establishment. For example, cans from the XYZ Company get recycled, but the ABC company containers go into the trash. Make up a "Dos and Don'ts" list for recycling and post it on the bulletin board or at workstations.
- Make sure to follow up to ensure that procedures are being followed and further educate employees as necessary.
4. 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.
5. Include recycling information in your orientation for new employees.
6. 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.
- If your restaurant or tavern is in a facility with multiple establishments 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.
7. 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.
8. If appropriate, make sure that your grounds crew knows to keep yard waste separate from other waste.
9. 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.
10. Remind employees to keep food waste out of recycling containers and trash. Food waste should be handled separately from trash and recyclables.
11. Restaurants and taverns 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 restaurants & taverns 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 dining and social gathering establishments.

Restaurants and taverns, hotels and motels, offices, schools, retail operations, 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.dep.greenport.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>.