

A FACT SHEET FOR

Restaurant Waste Reduction



Grease Goblin

Food service providers face many waste management issues. Solid waste disposal, energy consumption, and waste water make up the majority of environmental challenges that restaurants must address as part of their business operations. This fact sheet is intended to provide tips on how food service providers can reduce, reuse, and recycle these wastes.

Benefits of Waste Reduction Programs

- **Good Business.** Generally, waste reduction leads to increased operating efficiency and cost savings. Decreased solid waste generation reduces collection and disposal costs just as reducing electricity and water reduces utility bills. Waste minimization also may reduce purchasing costs.
- **Good Stewardship.** North Carolina is challenged with maintaining its clean waters, air, and land. All North Carolinians have a responsibility to themselves, fellow citizens, and future generations to maintain a clean environment.
- **Customer Satisfaction.** Surveys show that Americans are very concerned about the environment. They appreciate restaurants and other businesses that make efforts to be more environmentally aware — at the table and the way business is conducted.

Implementing a Waste Reduction Program

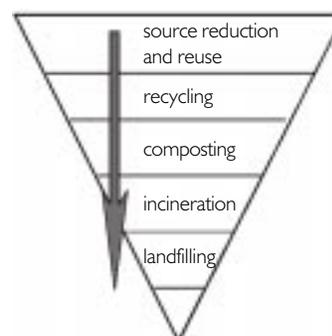
Once a restaurant has made a commitment to reduce waste, the manager or waste reduction team should assess all operations, such as food preparation, food service, purchas-

ing, and janitorial activities to identify opportunities to reduce waste and conserve water and electricity. Ideas for protecting the environment and realizing the cost benefits of waste reduction should be responsibilities of all employees in all job functions. Once waste reduction opportunities are identified, employees should be trained so they are comfortable with implementing the changes. Training should be repeated periodically to ensure that new employees are included. An employee suggestion and awards program can be established to maintain enthusiasm for the program. The remainder of this fact sheet lists specific activities that restaurants can undertake to reduce waste.

Reduction and Reuse

- ✓ Avoid overpackaging for take-out orders.
- ✓ Place rubber mats around bus and dish washing stations to reduce china and glass breakage.

The Waste Reduction Hierarchy lists waste management options in order of preference



OCTOBER 1999



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF POLLUTION PREVENTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE
1639 MAIL SERVICE CENTER ■ RALEIGH, NC 27699-1639

- ✓ Work with suppliers to take back and reuse corrugated cardboard boxes, five-gallon buckets, and other packaging.
- ✓ Use refillable condiment bottles instead of single-use packages. Refill them from bulk containers.
- ✓ Use cloth rags instead of paper towels.
- ✓ Encourage use of reusable dishes instead of styrofoam or other disposable ware.
- ✓ Use reusable take-home trays for regular customers.

Recycling

- ✓ Establish glass, plastic, and cardboard recycling with a local collector.
- ✓ Place a recycling bin in the dining area in which customers can place empty beverage containers.

Food Waste Management

- ✓ The National Restaurant Association estimates that 20 percent of all food prepared commercially in the United States goes to waste. See DPPEA's fact sheet on Food Material Management for more details on the following suggestions.
- ✓ Donate excess edible food to a local food bank or food rescue program. North Carolina has a strong "Good Samaritan" law that protects restaurants from liability associated with food donations. Call DPPEA for more information.
- ✓ Rotate perishable stocks at every delivery to minimize waste from spoilage, i.e., first-in, first-out.
- ✓ Contract with a rendering service for recycling used cooking oil, meat, and/or trap grease.
- ✓ Ensure that grease traps are properly maintained; clean fryers and filter the oil daily to extend the life of both the fryer and the oil.
- ✓ Never "hot flush" (continuously run hot water) through a grease trap.
- ✓ Check with your local government solid waste program for local composting facilities or animal farms that will accept non-edible food waste.
- ✓ Scrape leftovers into a food waste container prior to washing.
- ✓ Avoid sending food waste down the garbage disposal as this waste is only transferred from the landfill to the wastewater treatment plant.

Purchasing

- ✓ Choose environmentally friendly cleaning products, and try to purchase cleaning agents in concentrate.
- ✓ Ask for and purchase products such as paper towels, toilet tissue, menus, order pads, cash register tapes, plastic bags, dish trays, rubber mats, brooms, and benches made from recycled materials. Call DPPEA for more information.

Electricity & Water Conservation

- ✓ Develop and implement a monthly cleaning and maintenance program for all equipment. This program should include calibrating ovens and checking pipes for leaks.
- ✓ Use energy-conserving fluorescent lights instead of incandescent bulbs.
- ✓ Use low-wattage bulbs in exit signs instead of the more common high-wattage bulbs.
- ✓ Clean spills with a squeegee, broom, or vacuum.
- ✓ *Never* hose materials down the drain. This practice not only wastes water, but it contributes to organic loading at the wastewater treatment plant.
- ✓ Clean refrigerator coils and change air conditioning filters regularly to help these appliances run more efficiently.
- ✓ Install low-flow faucet adapters, and/or automatic turn-off faucets, and low-flow toilets in restrooms. Of the total water used in restaurants, restroom water usage ranges from 50 percent in full-service restaurants to 80 percent in fast food restaurants.
- ✓ Use energy-efficient and water-conserving appliances, e.g., dishwasher, refrigerator, freezer.
- ✓ Install motion or timer lights in restrooms, pantries, and freezer units. Lights can be set to go off after three to five minutes of inactivity.
- ✓ Set thermostats at reasonable levels.

Waste reduction offers cost savings that benefit both small and large restaurants. To learn more about any of these suggestions or to discuss your waste reduction concerns, call DPPEA, your local solid waste/recycling departments, or wastewater pretreatment coordinators.



The **Grease Goblin** is the mascot for DPPEA's Oil and Grease Management Program. He serves as a reminder to keep grease out of sinks and drains before it becomes a nuisance.

OCTOBER 1999