

In this issue: **Back to Basics—A Focus on Recycling**

- **How to put together a Green Team**  
*Draft your top picks to lead your company's recycling effort and we all win.....* Page 3
- **What is your Recycling Rate?**  
*How to calculate your rate.....* Page 4
- **Finding a Recycling Hauler**  
*You don't need to put an ad in the personals, just ask these questions.....* Page 5
- **Small Business can do it too**  
*What every small business needs to know about recycling.....* Page 5

# Recycling: Back to Basics

**R**ecycling is basic. Perhaps it wasn't a priority when the first municipal dump was established in Athens in 400 BC, but over the past century, municipalities began to dabble with recycling programs, particularly when driven by economics. This was especially true during World War II, when a scarcity of materials prompted recycling drives collecting scrap metals, newspaper, cardboard and other recyclable materials.

By 1970, the environment had also become an important factor in recycling, dramatically illustrated by the inaugural Earth Day. Two years later, the first recycling centers opened in Washington State, accepting bottles, aluminum cans and newspapers.

Over thirty years later, is recycling still important? YES! And should businesses continue to start and expand their recycling programs? Most definitely, YES!

**Recycling is basic to business.** In King County, 30 percent of all non-residential waste is comprised of office paper and other paper products. Include metals, plastics, glass and wood, then add yard waste and other compostable materials and we see that the majority of "waste" produced by businesses can be recycled or composted.

This issue of the Green Works newsletter highlights the basics: "why?"—the benefits of recycling; "what?"—the materials businesses can recycle; and "how?"—tips on how to set up a good recycling program and keep it going strong.



## Why Recycle?

**REDUCE DISPOSAL COSTS**  
Recycling reduces the amount of garbage that your business must throw out. Although you might have to pay for recycling collection, in most cases businesses realize a net savings when they reduce garbage collection frequency or container size.

Remember that the majority of so-called "waste" that businesses dispose of can actually be recycled or composted. (Just check out the list on page 2.)

see "WHY" inside

## How to get started?

**STEP 1. EXAMINE YOUR WASTE**  
Check your garbage bill. Your bill is a direct reflection of the quantity of waste your business produces, the size of your outdoor collection container and how frequently it's picked up.

Next, take a look inside your indoor trash containers or outdoor garbage dumpsters to see what kinds of materials you discard. (Compare what you see to the list on page 2 of this newsletter.) Are you paying for disposal of materials that could easily be recycled?

see "HOW" inside

# Recycling: Back to Basics



## “WHY” continued

### CONSERVE ENERGY

Processing virgin materials often takes more energy than processing recycled materials. For example, aluminum cans made from recycled aluminum require 95 percent less energy to produce than aluminum cans made from virgin bauxite ore.

### CONSERVE RESOURCES BY REDUCING THE NEED FOR VIRGIN MATERIALS

This is especially critical with non-renewable resources like metals, but also applies to precious “renewable” resources such as trees. It takes 24 trees to make each ton (400 reams) of virgin copier paper.

### PRODUCTS MADE FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS REDUCE POLLUTION

For every ton of paper products made from recycled newspaper rather than virgin timber, 16 fewer pounds of pollutants are released into the air.

### REDUCE PRODUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GASES

Recycling one ton of office paper prevents 1.43 tons of greenhouse gases from contributing to global climate change.

### REDUCE NEED FOR LANDFILL SPACE

Every yard or ton of material that is recycled is one less yard or ton that needs to be disposed of in a landfill.

Clearly, recycling is a win-win situation. It protects both the environment and our pocketbooks by preventing pollution, preserving natural resources and conserving landfill space. And what’s more, individual businesses can save money by recycling. 🗑️



## “HOW” continued

### STEP 2. FIND A RECYCLING SERVICE

Call King County Green Works for a list of recycling haulers, or visit our website at [www.metrokc.gov/greenworks](http://www.metrokc.gov/greenworks) (select “reuse and recycle database”). See the article on page 5 for questions to ask haulers.

Remember that even if you have to pay for recycling collection service, you may save money by reducing garbage container size and/or frequency of garbage collection.

### STEP 3. SET UP A SIMPLE PROGRAM

**Materials:** Decide what materials you will recycle. (See the list of recyclable materials below.)

**Recycling containers:** Many recycling collection companies provide both indoor and outdoor collection containers. If your service provider does not, call King County Green Works for information. Place recycling containers near garbage containers in each office or cubicle, lunch or break rooms and near copy machines and printers.

**Recycling how to’s:** Post simple, clear instructions on or near recycling containers to let employees know what, how and where to recycle. (See article on page 3 for tips on promoting participation.)

**Consolidate materials to be collected:** Assign specific employees or janitorial staff to transfer recyclables from individual workstations to a large indoor storage container. If this is not possible,

ask each employee to take responsibility for their own recyclables. Next, indoor storage containers will need to be emptied into an outdoor recycling container.

### STEP 4: TRACK YOUR SUCCESS — AND LET PEOPLE KNOW!

**Re-examine your waste and make adjustments:** Every few months, check your garbage bill to see how much waste you are producing and how often it’s collected. Adjust garbage container size and frequency of collection as needed. Check for opportunities to recycle additional types of materials, increase the size of recycling containers or frequency of collection.

**Calculate your recycling rate:** Increasing your recycling rate is the key to success. Use the Recycling Rate Calculator on page 4 to figure out your recycling rate before your program begins, again after three months, then quarterly or twice per year thereafter.

**Share your success!** Post decreased garbage volumes and increased recycling rates. Use newsletters, signs, and email to motivate employees to continue recycling.

King County Green Works can assist your business to start a recycling program, and keep it going. Please let us help you! Call 206-296-8800 to request information and assistance. 🗑️



## What Can We Recycle?

Most business have not mined the full potential of their recyclables. The following list includes categories of many recyclable materials. For full descriptions of each category, please see

[http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/bizprog/rec\\_assist/tips&definitions.htm#definitions](http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/bizprog/rec_assist/tips&definitions.htm#definitions) .

- Appliances
- Automotive parts, tires, oil, etc.
- Barrels/drums
- Batteries
- Carpet
- Construction, demolition and landclearing materials
- Electronics
- Fluorescent lights
- Food waste
- Glass
- Metal
- Pallets
- Paper
- Plastics:
  - Containers (bottles)
  - Non-container plastics (i.e., scrap, film, molding, sheeting, etc.)
- Textiles
- Toner cartridges
- Video/Film
- Yard waste
- Wood



# How to put together a Green Team

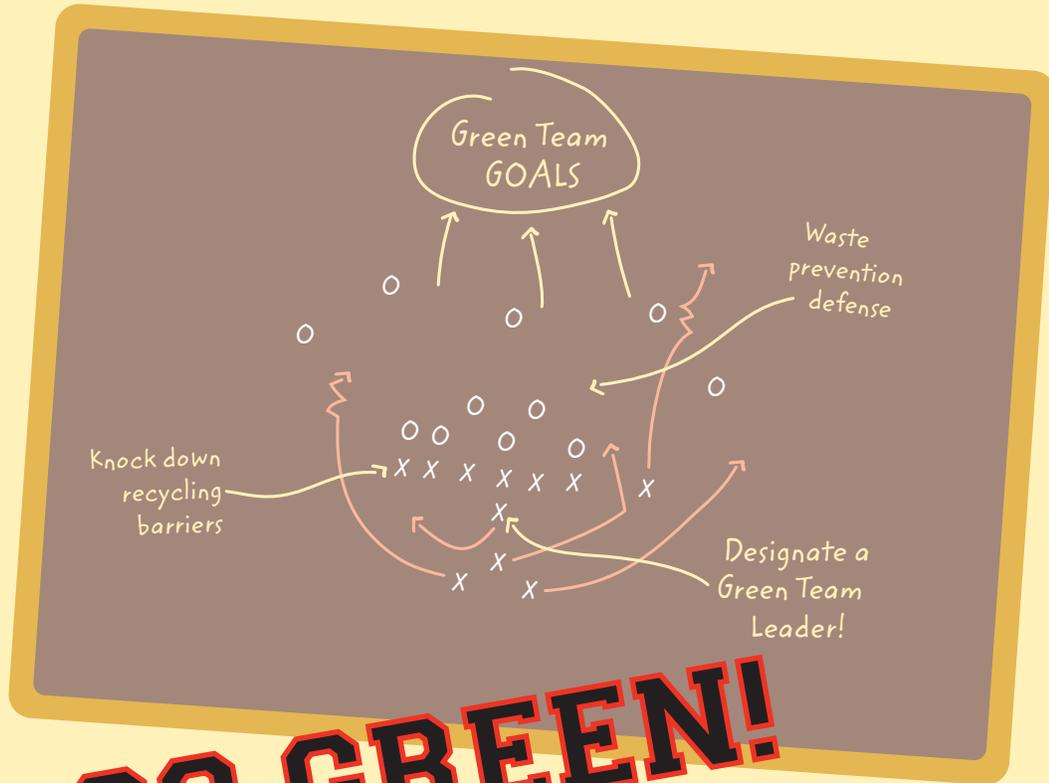
**W**inter is in the air, and bowl games are just around the corner. All around Puget Sound, fans are pulling out their purple and gold sweatshirts and crimson and gray parkas and rooting for their favorite team.

But there's another team that's working hard to make a difference. So fans, let's give a cheer for your (drum roll please)...GREEN TEAM!

So just what is a Green Team and when is their next game? A Green Team is a group of employees that promotes recycling and waste reduction in their work place. In some cases, one individual is designated to oversee the company's recycling efforts. In other businesses, a volunteer group, or "Green Team," designs and initiates the recycling program. And while a Green Team doesn't punt a football or run for touchdowns, they can still have a big impact on our quality of life here in King County.

One important role of Green Team members is to educate and excite other employees about the program. Here are some suggestions to generate enthusiasm around a recycling and waste reduction program:

- **Introduce the program.** Write a memo to all employees introducing the program or include an article explaining the program in your company newsletter.
- **Create a name or slogan** for the program. This consistency will keep the program on employees' minds.
- **Ask King County Green Works staff to assist with a training session.** Slide presentations and staff talks are available.



## GO GREEN!

- **Set recycling goals.** Establish an environmental policy or mission statement committing your company to recycling and preventing waste.
- **Create and display promotional posters** in high-traffic areas. Regularly post recycling levels for all to see.
- **Create contests or incentives**, such as a recycling challenge to see which department has the highest recycling rate.
- **Hold a meeting or throw a party** to kick-off the program.
- **Post lists of recyclable items** and how to recycle them.

- **Post a "Tip of the Week"**—to remind employees of the program while illustrating ideas on how to recycle and reduce waste.
- **Include program information in employee orientation** — get new employees involved right away.
- **Include recycling on staff meeting agendas from time to time** — to remind employees about the program, answer questions and solve problems.

If you're ready to quarterback your own Green Team, contact the King County Green Works Program to help you get started. Call 206-296-8800 and together, we can all win. Go Green Team! 🏈

# What is your Recycling Rate?

**C**alculating your recycling rate is the best way to establish a baseline to evaluate a recycling program. As you recycle more materials, you can compare your increased recycling rates to decreases in your garbage quantities and garbage bills.

Set a recycling goal of at least 40 percent. Many businesses can recycle and compost up to 70 percent or more of their solid wastes.

## Simple Two-Step Recycling Rate Calculation

**STEP 1:** Figure out your company's total amount of monthly solid waste.

How? Add the quantity of *Monthly Garbage (A)* to your amount of *Monthly Recycling (B)* to calculate your amount of *Monthly Solid Waste (C)*.

Ask your garbage and recycling haulers to provide you with monthly garbage and recycling quantities. These should be noted on your bills for garbage and recycling collection service. If your outdoor garbage and recycling containers are full when collected, you can determine the monthly quantities by multiplying the size of the container by the number of pick-ups per month

Be sure you are using the *same* unit of measurement—gallons, yards, pounds, or tons—for both garbage and recyclable materials.

**STEP 2:** Divide your amount of *Monthly Recycling (B)* by the amount of *Monthly Solid Waste (C)* you generate.

### Example

#### STEP 1:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Monthly Garbage} & \text{(A)} & \underline{20} \\ \text{Monthly Recycling} & \text{(B)} + & \underline{6} \\ \text{Monthly Solid Waste} & \text{(C)} = & \underline{26} \end{array}$$

#### STEP 2:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Monthly Recycling} & \text{(B)} & \underline{6} \\ \text{Monthly Solid Waste} & \text{(C)} \div & \underline{26} \\ \text{Recycling Rate} & \text{(D)} = & \underline{23} \% \end{array}$$

#### How it figures:

The garbage quantity is 20 cubic yards per month and the recycling quantity is 6 cubic yards per month, so this organization generates 26 cubic yards of solid waste per month.

Its recycling rate is 23 percent, which is 6 divided by 26. So, what's yours?

Need help figuring out your monthly garbage and recycling quantities? Call King County Green Works at 206-296-8800 for assistance. ☺

### Your Worksheet

#### STEP 1:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Monthly Garbage} & \text{(A)} & \underline{\quad} \\ \text{Monthly Recycling} & \text{(B)} + & \underline{\quad} \\ \text{Monthly Solid Waste} & \text{(C)} = & \underline{\quad} \end{array}$$

#### STEP 2:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Monthly Recycling} & \text{(B)} & \underline{\quad} \\ \text{Monthly Solid Waste} & \text{(C)} \div & \underline{\quad} \\ \text{Recycling Rate} & \text{(D)} = & \underline{\quad} \% \end{array}$$



## Recycling Help, Links & Information

King County Green Works

[www.metrokc.gov/greenworks](http://www.metrokc.gov/greenworks)

206-296-8800

King County Recycling and Reuse Database

[www.metrokc.gov/greenworks](http://www.metrokc.gov/greenworks) (click on "Reuse and Recycle Database") Includes list of recycling haulers and centers

King County Appliance Recycling Guide

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/resrecy/recycling/appliances.shtml>

Computer Recovery Project

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/crp.htm>

King County Construction Recycling Directory

[http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/bizprog/sus\\_build/contrgde.pdf](http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/bizprog/sus_build/contrgde.pdf)

King County Fluorescent Lamp Recycling Website

[www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste/fluor/](http://www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste/fluor/)

King County Recycling Information Line (and for hard copies of King County Solid Waste Division Recycling Publications)

206-296-4466

King County Solid Waste Acceptance Policies

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/swdinfo/acceptpolicy.htm>

Local Hazardous Waste Management Program

[www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste](http://www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste)

206-263-3050

Washington State Department of Ecology

[www.ecy.wa.gov](http://www.ecy.wa.gov)

1-800-RECYCLE

# Small Business can do it too

So you run a small business. You have all the right intentions, but don't recycle because you believe it's simply not practical.

You may have this list of perceived obstacles: Not enough storage...not enough volume...not enough program start-up capital...no recycler willing to make pick-ups...just not enough time.

Well, you don't necessarily need a lot of storage space or recycling volumes to initiate a recycling program and it doesn't need to cost you an arm and a leg. And if your time is limited, King County Green Works can help. Call us at 206-296-8800.

## Here are a few options:

- ❑ Contact a small recycling company or your garbage hauler. Some can provide recycling services to small businesses for a nominal fee.
- ❑ Sell or drop off your recyclables. Many recycling centers pay for certain separated materials when you bring them in. This revenue could go to the employee responsible, or perhaps into an employee "entertainment fund."
- ❑ Partner with neighboring businesses to increase your volume of recyclables. This will provide leverage with potential haulers.
- ❑ Recycling collection events are offered by some cities in King County for the businesses in those cities. Call King County Green Works for information.
- ❑ Bring selected materials to King County Transfer Stations. Recycling bins are at all locations except Algona Transfer Station. Materials accepted free of charge: mixed paper, cardboard, newspaper, aluminum cans, clean foil, tin cans with labels removed, glass bottles and jars, and plastic bottles (#1 PET and #2 HDPE).

Please note: Recycling space is limited at many transfer stations, so it may not be practical to use these stations to recycle large loads of certain materials (e.g., cardboard).



# Finding a Recycling Hauler

**S**o you've decided to start a recycling program. You've identified and listed the materials you would like to recycle. Now it's time to find a hauler to collect the materials.

There are a variety of companies offering commercial recycling collection service. Before making a decision, call several and ask them the questions listed below. You want to establish a long-term relationship that will serve you both practically and financially.

For a list of haulers, refer to King County's Reuse and Recycling Database (see *Recycling Help, Links and Information sidebar on page 4*).

Your business location and your volumes of recyclable materials may make the difference between a hauler's profit and loss on your account. Some haulers specialize in collecting certain materials; others collect a wide range. Depending on your business, you may need to establish a relationship with one or more haulers.

A note about the cost of recycling collection: depending upon how much you recycle, you may be able to decrease garbage costs by reducing the size of your garbage dumpster or the frequency of your garbage collection. The savings can be used to pay for the cost of recycling collection.

If the volume of materials your business generates is too small to be considered for collection, don't be discouraged. See the sidebar on this page for small business recycling options. ♻️



## Questions to ask prospective haulers

### ABOUT THE BASICS:

- ❑ Which materials do you collect? Must they be separated or can they be mixed together (*commingled*)?
- ❑ What are the minimum volumes or weight for collection?
- ❑ How frequently do you collect?
- ❑ Do you offer free collection for any materials?
- ❑ What do you charge to collect recyclables?

### ABOUT DUMPSTERS:

- ❑ Do you provide dumpsters or other outside collection containers? What size dumpster would you recommend? Is there an extra fee?
- ❑ Do you provide indoor desk-side recycling containers? If so, are they labeled with a list of materials accepted in the program?
- ❑ Do you provide signs and materials to educate our staff on contaminants, what can and cannot be included in the recycling bins, etc.?
- ❑ What kinds of contaminants should be avoided?

### ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE:

- ❑ Can you provide references?
- ❑ Would you provide us with data on how much material we recycle? If so, how frequently would you provide us with this information?

*If the hauler also collects garbage for your business, ask them if they'll provide data on garbage volumes. With this information, you can easily monitor decreased garbage volume and calculate your recycling rate.*

# So what is **Green Works?**

**King County Green Works** is a waste prevention and recycling assistance program for businesses. It is sponsored by the King County Solid Waste Division along with partnering suburban cities. If your business needs help reducing waste, locating recycled-content products or finding recycling vendors for office waste, contact our business assistance team. We can also provide information and referrals on energy and water conservation.

**King County Green Works Newsletter** is a quarterly publication written and produced by the King County Solid Waste Division. Inclusion of a business, product or service in this newsletter does not constitute an official endorsement or sponsorship by the Solid Waste Division or King County. Please send us your questions, story ideas or other suggestions and comments.

#### Receive King County Green Works Newsletter by email

Cut down on waste and receive the newsletter via email. We'll send it to you in Portable Document Format (PDF) that's read with Adobe's Acrobat Reader; a free software download available on the Internet. Just send your email address, name, and company name to our email address below.

**This material will be provided in alternate formats upon request.**

#### To contact us:

Phone: 206-296-8800

Email address: [greenworks.swd@metrokc.gov](mailto:greenworks.swd@metrokc.gov)

Website: [www.metrokc.gov/greenworks](http://www.metrokc.gov/greenworks)

Fax: 206-296-4475 • TTY Relay: 711

## **Set Goals...Get a Clipboard!**

Join other King County businesses that have set waste reduction and recycling goals. Create company goals and receive an attractive King County Green Works clipboard as our thank you. Of course, it's 100% post consumer plastic. You'll find our goal form at [http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/bizprog/rec\\_assist/goalform1.htm](http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/bizprog/rec_assist/goalform1.htm).

Send us a copy of your goals and we'll help you reach them! Then use your clipboard to proudly post your Certificate of Recognition. In the meantime, you can also post copies of this newsletter and other valuable recycling information for your employees.

## **Schedule a Visit...Get Recycled Office Supplies!**

King County Green Works encourages businesses to use environmentally friendly, recycled-content office products. We've put together a recycled-content office kit, free to interested businesses. This sampler kit was made possible through generous donations of recycled paper from Olympic Office Supply, Spicers Paper and assorted recycled content office products from Keeney's Office Plus.

Want a sampler? Please call King County Green Works and schedule a site visit. Green Works staff will come to you, offering helpful recommendations and tips on improving your waste prevention and recycling program.

**What Have We Here!**  
We at King County Green Works—producer of this newsletter—take pride in putting into practice what we preach. This newsletter is printed using soy-based inks on French Paper Company's Speckstone Basics—Pepper Gray—an acid and chlorine free 100% post-consumer non-deinked recycled paper.



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