

Florida *Green Lodging* Program

Technical Assistance

How to Set Up a Hotel Recycling Program



BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Florida's tourism industry serves an estimated 98.9 million visitors annually. More than 50 percent of these visitors are hotel guests during some or all of their stay. The waste generated by these guests constitutes a large portion of the state's commercial waste stream. Reducing materials at their source, coupled with recovery, reuse and recycling, prevents pollution and reduces or eliminates treatment and disposal costs.



Recycling programs must be specifically designed to accommodate the hotel's operating procedures. Resource management efforts such as waste reduction, waste minimization, and recycling can represent an important potential savings in terms of solid waste management.

Recycling should be incorporated into daily operations along with staff training. Each hotel recycling program must be specifically designed to accommodate the hotel's procedure of operation, hotel activities and structural design. A large property can generate as much as 8 tons of waste per day. Up to 60 percent of the waste is recyclable.

Educating guests about recycling through in-room collateral, media boards, hotel apps, and in-house television is a great public relations tool that is received favorably by guests. Many guests are familiar with recycling from home or work and are glad to continue the process when in a hotel.

In designing a recycling program for your hotel, consider the following commonly recycled materials: aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass, cardboard, office supplies, food waste, cooking grease and landscaping waste, appliances, batteries, building materials, carpets, computers, furniture and fluorescent bulbs, antifreeze, Freon, motor oil, paint, and scrap metal.

Also, consider the life cycle costs of products. Life cycle costs include factoring the initial cost, repair, maintenance, and disposal costs. You pay twice for products, delivery, and disposal.

How to Get Started

A little research will go a long way. First assess – What are you already doing to reduce, reuse and recycle? To know this, it is recommended that your research include the following:

Set up a waste reduction committee made up of staff members from each operational area:

Explain your team goals, and what you are trying to accomplish. Ask what procedures they are using for disposal, cleaning, and training for personnel. This committee will gather the preliminary information which will help formulate recommendations and procedures. Appoint a waste reduction coordinator to provide a central point for leadership for this initiative. Reach out to all

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employees in the early stages of the recycling program and include on-going training. Some of the best ideas come from your employees.

Conduct a waste audit for each operational area:

Do a walk-through of each area. Identify the recyclable material, source of materials, and the quantity of the recyclable materials currently being collected or thrown away. This audit will help identify opportunities to reduce waste, conserve water, and electricity.

Considerations should be given to:

- Who collects the waste?
- When is the waste collected?
- Where is the waste stored until collection?
- How is the waste collected at the source and diverted to recycling?



This analysis of the consumption of waste from a hotel will serve as a valuable planning tool for the waste reduction program.

Conduct a waste evaluation:

Learn about your waste and do a waste evaluation, which includes examining current and prospective purchasing and disposal cost records. Research your waste disposal costs, options, and alternatives.

Determine the composition of your waste stream:

Classify materials for recycling and initiate other waste reduction activities by determining the composition of your waste stream. Selection of material disposal methods is one of the key considerations before designing a recycling program.

Find out what materials are recycled in your area:

Most communities have a recycling coordinator that is available to assist or contact FDEP for a list of recyclers. Contact information for your county's recycling coordinator can be found [here](#).

Negotiate contract with waste and recycling provider:

- Have more than just verbal agreements, do written contracts. Some items to consider for service:
- What materials do you collect?
- What size container is needed?
- Do you supply containers?
- Is there a charge for the containers?
- Is there a minimum volume or weight requirement for pickup frequency?
- What are the charges for collection?
- How frequent is collection?

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Most recyclers base charges on operational cost and require a minimum quantity of materials. This can create storage issues for back of house operation. Consider storage when deciding what materials to collect and how materials are collected. Also, consider that when fees for recycling and landfilling are low, incentives to recycle and practice waste reduction may decrease, whereas increased tipping fees promote waste reduction and recycling.

Design a materials flow plan:

A materials flow plan identifies materials, collection, container size and placement, recycling, reuse, and disposal. It is very important that you label your recycling bins stating to the guests exactly what can be placed in the recycling bins. Be sure to co-locate all recycling bins beside garbage receptacles.



Have an auditor evaluate your facility, if necessary:

Solicit help from the city or county recycling coordinator or contact a waste hauler to have an auditor come to evaluate your facility.

Practice Eco-Purchasing:

Examine your current buying practices. Are you just buying a product because that is the way it has always been done? Eco-purchasing involves evaluating practices and products not only in price and quality, but also on durability, reusability, recyclability, and content. This strategy calls for business consumers to think before purchasing any material or service. It may require changing the way things are done or how a product is packaged. Work with vendors to get the best value.

Inform hotel owner and/or corporate management on your recycling initiative:

Keep owners and corporate management informed about your waste stream and recycling opportunities that will save time and money. Let them know what you are trying to achieve and ask for their support.

Establish an accounting system that reflects monthly waste management costs:

Formulate a monthly report tracking waste disposal and reduction information.

Set goals and objectives based on a realistic timeline:

Working with the committee, set goals and objectives based on a realistic timeline. Map out action plans to reach these goals and objectives and assign responsible parties. Practical reduction programs must be periodically evaluated in relationship to the overall economic benefits and impacts to time and manpower usage. Consider sharing recycling with neighboring facilities. Monitor, measure, and report progress.

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Target areas for waste reduction:

Areas that should be included are office areas, food and beverage outlets, and guest rooms. Swimming pool and spa, convention and meeting rooms, housekeeping and laundry, landscaping maintenance, and purchasing.

Training and Communication

Staff training is one of the most important keys to making it all work. You must train current staff and new staff on the overall program. Short frequent refresher training programs are encouraged. Monitoring is necessary and receiving feedback from personnel is also important to find out what is working and what is not. Quality education and clear communication will result in higher participation.



Appoint a person responsible for separating waste for recycling:

For general waste disposal, appoint a responsible person to make sure items are separated as they go into dumpsters or main collection containers. This monitoring will help with a load not being rejected due to contamination and incurring higher disposal cost. It has been demonstrated that the closer the waste generation is monitored, the less the hotels paid for disposal.

Provide opportunities for regular feedback:

Communication is key and regular feedback will be necessary to keep the program going. Consider using a newsletter which can get information out to more than one employee at a time. Include how much and what materials are being covered as well as information on any new efforts to reduce waste further.

Determine collection areas:

Many hotels have implemented recycling programs which include collection in guest rooms as well as containers in the pool area, lobby, meeting rooms, and other common areas.

Communicate to your guests:

Communication is the key to a successful guest recycling program. Consider using signage, letters in the room information guides, hotel in-room television channel, posters, key packets, receipts, hotel apps, etc. to get information out to guests.

Electronic Waste (E-Waste)

E-Waste is waste generated from electronic equipment. New technology is making e-waste the fastest growing waste stream in the country. Most items that we have today will be obsolete in three to five years. Some of the items that fall into this category are land-line phones, cellular phones,

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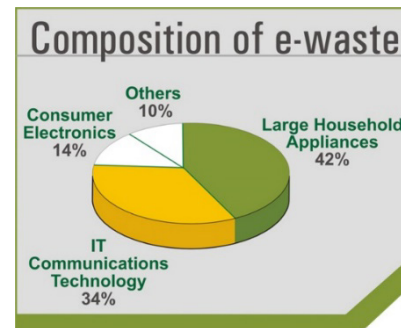


computers, keyboards, monitors, hand-held video games, calculators, TVs, cameras, copiers, and printers.

The following are opportunities and methods for reducing your e-waste:

Develop a waste reduction plan for electronics:

Electronics are potentially recyclable but contain lead, which can be harmful to the environment if disposed of improperly. All lodging facilities have at least one television in each guest room, and many have two. There are additional televisions in the lobbies, guest and employee lounges, laundry rooms, bars, restaurants, and in-house gyms.



Many of these facilities lease their televisions and phone systems that may be connected to providing cable, satellite service, or internet service. This option takes the burden from the hotel and shifts it back to the leasing company. The leasing company recycles these items to other properties, or they are sold at the end of the lease (three to five years).

Beach motels may have to replace televisions more often because the salt air tends to corrode the internal components.

Recycle or donate used electronics:

Most electronics that are placed with garbage are collected by local junkmen before the collector arrives. Many properties have a system to sell to their own employees or residents. Others donate to local charities.

Find out about e-waste recycling opportunities in your area:

Several stores have recycling opportunities for cell phones. Many counties and cities also have electronic recycling days for their communities. For large quantity recycling, contact your local recycling coordinator to find out what is being done in your area.

For more information on local recycling opportunities, contact your county's recycling coordinator. Information on your county's recycling coordinator can be found [here](#).

Or contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Recycling Program [here](#).