

Waste Reduction

Objective

Reduce waste going to landfills by careful purchasing decisions as well as promoting reusing, recycling and composting.

Cities and counties in the United States, Canada and around the world are adopting zero-waste policies. Our goal is to work toward this in every event we plan.

How Tos

- Practice waste prevention. Before purchasing anything, ask, “Do we really need this?” If you do, then purchase the least amount possible, in the most sustainable form, with no or minimum packaging. Plan for reuse if at all possible.
- Minimize handouts.
- Serve food with reusable china or *nontoxic compostable* disposables.
- Do not serve water in individual throwaway/recyclable bottles.
- Arrange for excess/leftover food to be donated as permitted by local law. If there are too many regulations for giving food to those institutions that can distribute it to others, have women bring reusable food containers to take leftover food home to their families.
- Compost food waste. Some municipalities and waste haulers can do this. Some community gardens or master gardener programs associated with a botanical garden or ag extension service may be willing to handle this for you. Make some calls!
- Determine what local recycling laws are. Consider establishing a local recycling and composting team to help you. If you do, be sure to provide special recognition in the program and announcements.
- Offer recycling for paper, cardboard, metal, glass and plastic. Place bins in convenient locations, clearly labeled. Make time during the orientation to explain proper procedures. Recruit some volunteers to help monitor the various bins to ensure that you do not “cross-contaminate” your garbage, recycling and compost bins.
- Offer opportunities to reuse handout materials, boxes, etc., before they are recycled. Create an easy to find “take it or leave it station.”
- Design any displays or exhibits to be reused or donated.
- Any carpet ordered will include recycled content, is reusable and will be recycled after the end of its useful life by the vendor providing it.
- Measure the waste you produce and what you divert through recycling and composting. Report this data in follow-ups to the event and use it as a gauge to do better the next time.



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Helpful Resources

- List of zero waste cities and counties in the United States: zwia.org/news/zero-waste-communities.
- Background on zero waste policies: www.grrn.org/page/what-zero-waste.
- For basic background on composting: www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/composting/index.htm.
- For basic info on recycling and reusing items: www2.epa.gov/recycle.
- Biodegradable Products Institute (Certified Compostable): www.bpiworld.org.
- Feeding America Food donation resources: feedingamerica.org.
- Food Waste Infographic: ensia.com/infographics/the-rotten-world-of-food-waste.
- Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food From Farm to Fork to Landfill: www.nrdc.org/food/files/wasted-food-ip.pdf.

Fast Facts

More than 50 percent of the cities of New Zealand have a zero waste policy, and the country has adopted it as a goal. This is catching on in the United States too.

Recycling an aluminum can saves enough energy to run a television for 2 hours!
(Source: MeetGreen)

Some 3 million tons of plastic garbage swirls around in the North Pacific, in a mass estimated to be double the size of Texas:
www.csmonitor.com/2006/1011/p02s01-usgn.html.

More than 9 million people in the United States live near of a hazardous waste facility. More than half of these (5.1 million) are people of color. (United Church of Christ, *Toxic Waste and Race at Twenty: 1987-2007*)

Glossary

Biodegradable: Capable of being decomposed by natural, biological processes. Generally, this process takes place on organic materials (plants, animals and other substances from living organisms), but some types of artificial materials with microorganisms can biodegrade.

Compost: Composting is the process of gathering organic materials in certain proportions, adding water as needed, and allowing them to biodegrade into useful nutrients. Compost can be used to enrich soil.

Recycle:

Zero waste: A goal to guide people, businesses and governments to change their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles in which all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use. It requires designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources and not burn or bury them. Essentially this means all materials will be reused, recycled or composted.

Policy Foundation

The Book of Discipline “The Natural World” (§1160), the Social Principles.

The Book of Resolutions #1023 “Environmental Justice for a Sustainable Future,” #1025 “Environmental Racism,” #1026 “Environmental Stewardship,” #1027 “God’s Creation and the Church,” #1030 “Recycling and the Use of Recycled Products.”