



## STARTING A RECYCLE PROGRAM HOW-TO GUIDE

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## STARTING A RECYCLE PROGRAM

Whether you want to recycle on your own or set up recycling for the whole team or organization—this how-to guide outlines seven actions you will need to take. It also includes answers to frequently asked recycling questions. If a recycling program already exists in your workplace, use this how-to guide to uncover actions you can take to measure its impact and identify how it can be improved.



### **Action 1 – Measure your current practices to determine a baseline performance rate.**

This can be as easy as a visual inspection of the number of garbage and recycle bins, or a more detailed assessment of waste disposal practices. Consider which method makes the most sense for you or your workplace, and don't get too bogged down with gathering data. Think of these initial steps as a pilot project; start small and aim to expand on your successes later. The next page lists two simple ways to assess your current recycling participation.



1) Complete an Eco Check-up by answering the following questions:

I. Waste	Check-up 1		Check-up 2	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Track your printed documents over the course of the day. Are there any printed documents you could have been <b>reduced</b> ?				
Do you have a <b>recycle</b> bin in you workspace?				
Do you have a place to <b>reuse</b> scrap paper, rubber bands, or paper clips in your workspace?				
Go through your garbage at the end of the day. Are there any items that could have been <b>reused, recycled</b> or <b>composted</b> ?				
Are there any items that you <b>recycled</b> that could have been <b>reduced</b> ?				

The 3Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—are the golden rules of handling waste responsibly. They form a *hierarchy* of actions that guide us towards avoiding disposal in order to prolong the life of our landfills and resources. This can be done by **reducing** our consumption which prevents waste in the first place. The second step is **reusing** materials again and again in their original form. Reducing and reusing are the first two and most important steps of the 3Rs. After exhausting the first two Rs, **recycle** any remaining waste.



2) Complete an Eco Check-up for your team by completing this visual inspection of waste bins:

I. Waste Disposal	Check-up # 1	Check-up # 2
<p>Visual Inspection of Waste Bins            This simple exercise will require a few volunteers to randomly inspect about ten garbage cans. Staff will count and record the amount of recyclables found in the garbage cans and compare with future data. Record the number(s) here.  <i>Note: Volunteers will need gloves and coveralls/old clothes, a sheet of plastic to dump the garbage bins onto, and a first aid kit.</i></p>		



### Action 2 – Research recycling collection in your building and municipality.

Before starting a recycling program, first gather information related to the following:

- Determine what items are recyclable in your municipality by contacting your town/city office of waste management or call Alberta’s Recycling Information Line: 1-800-463-6326.
- Find out your current recycling service provider. In some rural areas, the municipality provides this service, whereas in urban centers, private companies most often collect recyclables. The company and the cost vary by municipality. Some charitable organizations will provide pick-up for items such as bottles.
- Determine if you have support and funding from management to secure recycling collection services.



### Action 3 – Assign roles and responsibilities.

When you create a recycling program you are essentially asking people to change their behaviour. There are a couple of things you can do to facilitate this behavior change process.

Firstly, determine how recyclable materials are going to be collected. If collecting recyclables is **not** going to be taken care of by janitorial staff, then assigning roles or asking for volunteers to help with collection is an important first step.

A common reaction to a new recycling system is that people wonder why they have to empty their own garbage and recycling bins. Staff may feel that it's not their job or that taking responsibility for their own waste puts custodial staff out of work. This reaction can prevent people from getting involved. So what can you do? The answer is communication and training. Keep the dialogue flowing and provide your colleagues with the information they need to get past personal barriers. Raising awareness and providing training will also ensure great results from your program.



#### Action 4 – Communicate change with staff.



Open and clear communication applies to everyone impacted by the new or changing system. This includes management, staff, maintenance, and cleaning personnel. As a result, everyone should be asked for feedback so that changes reflect everyone's input. These changes should be shared frequently and clearly to all parties involved.

Check out *Getting People Involved* [www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/involved.pdf](http://www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/involved.pdf) to build participation for your recycling program. Answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) are listed on page six and can be used in your communication strategy. In addition to communication, prompts placed near the recycling or garbage area remind people about the basics. Click here to download the *3Rs Reminder Poster* [www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/3rs.ppt](http://www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/3rs.ppt) or *Waste, Energy and Water Prompt Stickers* [www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/stickers.doc](http://www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/stickers.doc).



### Action 5 – Set up recycle bins.

There are two main types of bins you will need to provide: desk-side recycling bins and central collection bins. Use the information gathered in **Action 1** to determine how many bins are needed in your department. Bins can be purchased at most hardware and stationery stores.



Central collection bins are used for each item you are going to recycle. Place them in appropriate locations, such as kitchen areas, copy rooms and board rooms. You will need to work with your building manager or maintenance department to set up infrastructure to manage the flow of various types of recyclable materials (e.g., paper, bottles, and ink toner).

A large garbage can is not usually required because the majority of office waste is recyclable. It is common in recycling programs to set up a mini-bin program for non-recyclable waste. Mini-bins are usually attached to desk-side recycling bins. These bins can be emptied by custodial staff or emptied by each staff person into a large central garbage can.



[www.west-can.com](http://www.west-can.com)



### Action 6 – Assess the recycling set-up.

Return to **Action 1** and complete the same Eco Check-up done at the start of your project and compare results. Also consider the following questions:

- Does everyone have a desk-side bin? Are the central collection bins well situated? Are materials regularly being collected?
- Ask your colleagues how they think the set-up can be improved.



### Action 7 – Track your progress and communicate your results.

It is important to track your progress for this initiative to ensure you reach your target and to provide concrete results to management or funders. Find out more about *Getting People Involved* [www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/involved.pdf](http://www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/involved.pdf).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How can I safely recycle confidential papers?**

Some paper that is generated by an office is confidential in nature and therefore should be collected separately. Confidential documents should be shredded immediately or stored in locked bins. If paper is shredded on site, ensure that it is recycled and if shredded by a service provider, make it a requirement that they recycle the shredded paper.

### **How can my workplace collect money from beverage containers?**

In Alberta, all beverage containers including milk can be returned for a deposit refund. Some workplaces may choose to put the refund towards an office fund. Others may collect beverage containers for pick-up by a charitable organization. The Alberta Beverage Container Recycling Corporation coordinates container pick-up for charities and schools. Contact them to find out about charitable organizations in your community ([www.abcrc.com](http://www.abcrc.com)).

### **How do I know what can be recycled and where it should be taken?**

Your local municipality will give you information on what can be recycled locally. Every municipality in Alberta accepts different recycled products so it is important to get this information before embarking on a recycling program. Some municipalities allow recycled items to be mixed together, while other requires them to be separated. You may want to contact your municipality to find out about using their collection facilities.

For more information check out the following:

*Alberta Beverage Container Recycling Corporation* [www.abcrc.com/cfm/index.cfm](http://www.abcrc.com/cfm/index.cfm)

Here you will find information on setting up collection programs with local charities.

*Alberta Plastic Recycling Association* [www.recycleyourplastic.ca/](http://www.recycleyourplastic.ca/)

This website provides facts related to how plastic recycling can benefit the environment as well as a 4-step process to plastic recycling.

*Recycling Council of Alberta* [www.recycle.ab.ca/](http://www.recycle.ab.ca/)

Visit this site to learn more about Waste Reduction Week and waste management assistance for the industrial, commercial and institutional sector.

*Beverage Container Management Board* [www.bcmb.ab.ca/find-a-depot.html](http://www.bcmb.ab.ca/find-a-depot.html)

This website provides a listing of Alberta Bottle Depot locations.

*Alberta Recycling Information Hotline* Phone: 1-800-463-6326.

## How do I find out what kind of plastic this container is made from?

There are many different kinds of plastics. Each type has properties which make it suitable for different uses. In some municipalities, plastics must be separated by type before they are recycled. A numbering system, found on the bottom of the container, identifies different types of plastics. The number, from 1 – 7, is often found inside a circle of arrows, also called the Mobius Loop. Numbers 1-6 are types of plastics and number 7 is an "other" category. Here is some helpful information:



### **Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET)**

Common Uses                      soft drink bottles, water bottles

Recycled Product                      soft drink and juice bottles, deli and bakery  
Uses                                      trays, carpets, clothing and textiles



### **High Density Polyethylene (HDPE)**

Common Uses                      milk, juice and water containers, household  
chemical and detergent bottles

Recycled Product                      bottles for laundry products and motor oil,  
Uses                                      recycling bins, agricultural pipe



### **Vinyl (polyvinyl chloride-PVC)**

Common Uses                      plastic films, clean plastic containers

Recycled                                      fencing, pipes and non-food bottles  
Product Uses



### **Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE)**

Common Uses                      containers that require flexibility, grocery and  
garbage bags, shrink wrap and stretch film

Recycled Product                      bags, shrink film and disposable diapers  
Uses



### **Polypropylene (PP)**

Common Uses

caps and lids, ketchup and syrup bottles, containers for dairy products

Recycled Product Uses

car parts, carpets, battery casings, textiles, industrial fibers and films for packaging



### **Polystyrene (PS)**

Common Uses

meat trays, egg cartons, coffee cups, and packaging

Recycled Product Uses

office accessories, videocassettes and cases, and insulation board

### **Why and how should I recycle batteries?**

Batteries account for approximately 88 per cent of all toxic metals found in landfills. If an organization has a battery collection box, individuals will be more likely to dispose of their batteries in a responsible way. Collect dead batteries and store them in a safe and secure area until they can be properly disposed. Check with your municipality to see when and where to drop off hazardous waste such as batteries, or visit these sites:

- To order a battery collection box contact the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation. [www.rbrc.org](http://www.rbrc.org)
- Visit Battery University for background information [www.batteryuniversity.com](http://www.batteryuniversity.com)
- Visit the Alberta Round-Up schedule to see dates in your area when batteries are collected. [www3.gov.ab.ca/env/waste/aow/hhw/Roundup\\_dates.html](http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/waste/aow/hhw/Roundup_dates.html)

When purchasing rechargeable batteries, ensure that they are compatible with the charger. When your rechargeable batteries can no longer be recharged, make sure to dispose of them safely by taking them to a hazardous waste facility or eco-station.



Bring rechargeable batteries back to participating retailers or municipalities by checking out [www.call2recycle.org](http://www.call2recycle.org). Outlets for lead-acid batteries can be found in most communities. Non-rechargeable batteries do not contain heavy metals and can safely go in the garbage unless there is a recycle program in your community. Call the Alberta Recycle Information Line at 1-800-463-6326 to find out more.

### **Can I recycle print cartridges?**

Your workplace can recycle toner and ink cartridges. Most cartridge manufacturers will take back the empty toner cartridges and replace them with refilled ones. Many products have instructions on the box about how to recycle or reuse them; some companies may even provide instructions, packaging materials and free postage in order to assist you in recycling their products. Here is some helpful information:

Laser-Tone International (1-800-EARTH-58) offers free pick-up and delivery of recycled and reused cartridges.

Environmental Laser (1-800-442-8391) can tell you what your cartridge will become once it is recycled and the differences between the two.

For Xerox branded products, visit: [www.xerox.com/about-xerox/recycling/enus.html](http://www.xerox.com/about-xerox/recycling/enus.html) for instructions as to how to recycle cartridges.

For HP branded products, visit:

[https://h30248.www3.hp.com/recycle/supplies/index.asp?\\_cc=ca](https://h30248.www3.hp.com/recycle/supplies/index.asp?_cc=ca)

### **How do I prevent cross contamination of recyclables?**

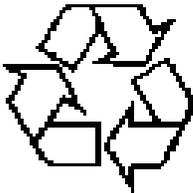
Rinse containers to prevent contamination and control odours. Become familiar with your municipality's guidelines about sorting recycling. If recycle bins become contaminated, it can render the whole bin unrecyclable.

### **Why should I empty my desk-side recycling bins?**

We all have a responsibility to manage our own waste in order to help protect the environment. Waste reduction is more effective when it occurs at the source.

## What does closing the loop mean and why should I do this?

When purchasing environmentally friendly products, you are helping close the recycling loop. The circle of arrows or the recycling symbol is called the Mobius Loop. The three arrows represent the three main components of recycling: collection (separating items for recycling), remanufacturing (using the material collected to manufacture new products), and sales of recycled products (buying products made from recycled materials). This process or loop, when repeated over and over again, creates true recycling. It is easy to find products made with recycled or post-consumer materials; all you have to do is read the label. These are what the labels mean:



The three white or black arrows mean that the product is recyclable, but not necessarily made from recycled material. Recyclable means that it can be recycled. You can be an environmentally friendly consumer by looking for this symbol on products when you go shopping.



The percentage of post-consumer recycled content may also be specified below the Mobius Loop.

Per cent  
written here

Post-consumer refers to recycled materials that were collected through a recycling program. Pre-consumer, on the other hand, indicates materials that never make it to the marketplace (such as trimmings from materials cut out in a factory), but are put back into the process of manufacturing new products. This pre-consumer portion which is incorporated back into the production process is considered part of the recycled content.

## What is hazardous waste and how do I handle hazardous waste?

Hazardous waste (HW) is any substance being disposed of that can be classified as either flammable, corrosive, reactive, or toxic. Products with hazardous characteristics like solvents are called dangerous goods when they are still in use and hazardous waste when they are being disposed of (hazardous recyclables when being recycled). An easy way to tell if an item is a dangerous good is by looking for any of hazard symbols on the container. Because of their hazardous characteristics, this waste should not be disposed of in municipal landfills or sewage systems.

Dangerous goods that you may find around the workplace:

- Building materials containing asbestos
- Non-asbestos insulation materials such as fiberglass and refractory ceramic fibres
- Lead paints
- Mercury (fluorescent lights, switches, gauges)
- Polychlorinated biphenyls or PCBs (liquid-cooled equipment, light ballasts, paints, electrical insulating materials)
- Oils and lubricants
- Batteries and fuels
- Paints and thinners
- Glues and solvents
- Cooling system chemicals such as Freon
- Compressed gases
- Welding rods and solder<sup>5</sup>

Follow these basic guidelines on the proper use of dangerous goods:

- Read and follow all directions carefully.
- Store materials securely in a well ventilated area in original containers.
- Use only for the intended purpose.
- Give products time to work (e.g., cleaners time to soak or pesticides time to react).

Management of Hazardous Waste and Recyclables:

All generators of waste including hazardous waste should familiarize themselves with the Waste Control Regulation and supporting documents available on-line at [www3.gov.ab.ca/env/Waste/](http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/Waste/).

Hazardous industrial wastes or contaminated soils require management at specific facilities. On-site or off-site recycling, treatment or disposal options are available including out-of-province alternatives.

Alberta hazardous waste/recyclable management system includes:

- 57 facilities approved by Alberta Environment to recycle, treat or dispose of hazardous wastes, and
- 56 facilities approved by the Energy and Utilities Board for oilfield wastes.

Contacts for off-site treatment and disposal including the Swan Hills Treatment Centre are available at:

<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/waste/rr/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> Work Safe Alberta. (n.d.). Hidden Danger: Hazardous Materials in Your Building. Retrieved August 25, 2009, from [http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB\\_ch066.pdf](http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB_ch066.pdf).

There are recycling options for some hazardous wastes, such as used oil, lead-acid batteries, and propane tanks. Check the Yellow Pages under “Recycling” for other opportunities in your area.

There are many environmentally friendly alternatives to hazardous products. Find out more in the *Green Cleaning How-to Guide*  
[www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/cleaning.pdf](http://www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca/docs/cleaning.pdf).