Waste Reduction and Recycling

A Guide for Owners of Apartments & Other Multi-Family Dwellings

Apartments

Save money: By recycling you may be able to get a smaller dumpster or cut the number of times your dumpster needs to be emptied.

Reduce unsightly litter: You can cut down on the amount of waste in your dumpster and those overflow weekend messes.

Create a higher quality renting experience: By providing more services at minimal cost and meeting renters' expectations of environmental responsibility, you can help build the image of your facility.

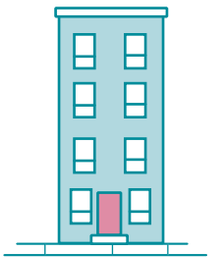
Help the environment: By recycling you help re-use materials already produced, which means fewer virgin materials are consumed—that conserves our natural resources.

Obey the Law: Recycling is required by State Statutes and local recycling ordinances.

RECYCLING does it all!

Requirements for Owners of Multi-Family Dwellings

Wisconsin's Waste Reduction and Recycling Law* and local ordinances require the owners of ***all*** multi-family buildings and facilities to:

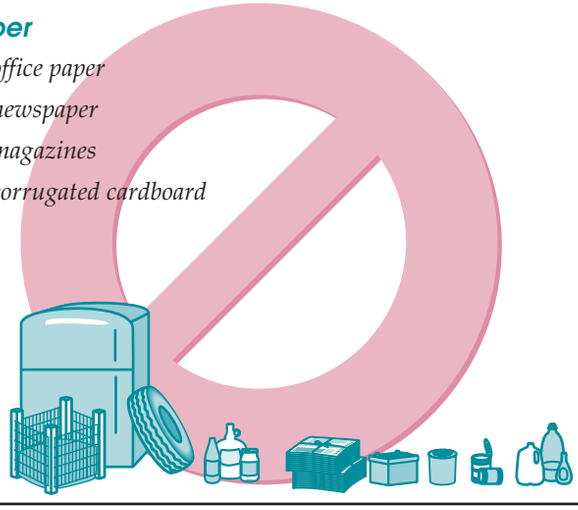


- Provide separate containers for the materials banned from landfills and incinerators**.
- Notify residents in writing about the recycling program at the time of renting or purchasing and at least semi-annually thereafter.
- Arrange for the collection and transportation of recyclables to a recycling or processing facility.
- Educate residents about the three Rs (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) and other waste reduction strategies.
- Obey local recycling ordinance requirements.

Materials banned from disposal in Wisconsin:

Paper

- *office paper*
- *newspaper*
- *magazines*
- *corrugated cardboard*



Containers

- *aluminum cans*
- *steel (tin) cans*
- *glass bottles and jars*
- *plastic containers (#1 and #2)****

Other Materials

- *major appliances*
- *waste tires*
- *lead-acid vehicle batteries*
- *yard wastes*
- *used motor oil*

** You can order a summary of Wisconsin's Recycling Law by calling (608) 266-2111 and asking for publication WA-422 Solid Waste Recycling and Waste Reduction in Wisconsin.*

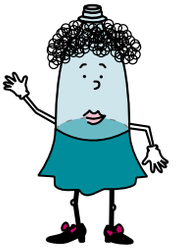
*** Some incinerators have "grandfathered" exceptions. Contact your responsible unit for specifics.*

****Current law offers a variance to plastics labeled #3 - #7.*

Designing a Waste Reduction & Recycling Program

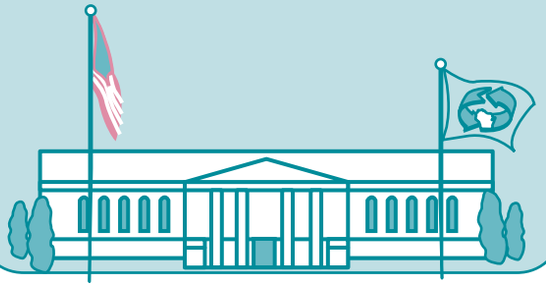
1. Contact Your Local Recycling Representative

The recycling coordinator for your responsible unit can explain your community's recycling program and what is required of you. Besides recycling newspapers, magazines, cardboard, glass bottles and jars, aluminum and steel cans, and plastic containers, be sure to ask how to manage yardwaste, lead-acid batteries, used motor oil, appliances and tires. To find out who your recycling coordinator is, contact your local town, city or county clerk or call the DNR recycling specialist in your region.



"Responsible Units" manage local recycling programs and take the form of a municipality, county, Indian tribe, township or other unit of local government. Following the Recycling Law, they have enacted ordinances requiring the owners of all residences, institutions and businesses within their jurisdiction to recycle.

Responsible units are required to have a system in place to collect recyclables from single-to-four unit residences. In some cases they may do the same for buildings and facilities with five or more residential units, but they are not required to do so. The *owners* of buildings and facilities with five or more family units are responsible to ensure that recyclables are separated from trash and taken to a recycling facility. If you have a building or facility with five or more units, check with your responsible unit to see if they will pick up recyclables from your property. If they will not, then you must arrange to do this yourself or have an independent hauler do it.

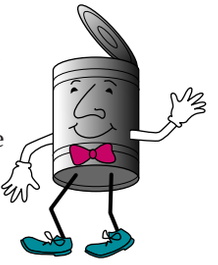


2. Identify Key Players

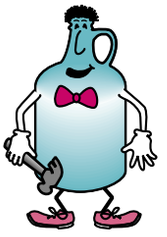
An effective recycling program begins with you, the owner. Fortunately, there are plenty of people who can help you. Identify these key players and their roles and responsibilities.

Resident or Building Manager

Your resident or building manager can be one of your most effective partners in creating and maintaining a successful recycling program. Since the manager has the most face to face contact with residents, he or she can continually educate residents and encourage recycling.



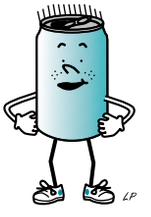
Maintenance Staff



Maintenance staff may be responsible for maintaining the recycling area, moving collection containers to an accessible location for haulers, checking for contamination (items that cannot be recycled or are dirty) and assisting with educational and enforcement efforts.

Residents

With education and support, residents will be the first line of defense in your recycling program!



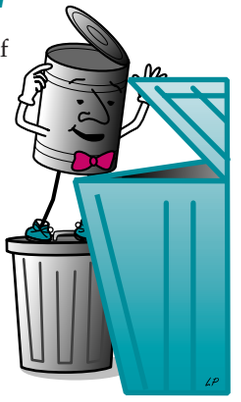
Local Haulers

Haulers often set up recycling programs and provide educational materials and feedback. Haulers also may offer advice on container size, suggest possible container locations and advise you on the frequency of pick-ups.

Local Recycling Centers

Material Recovery Facilities or recycling centers may provide drop-off opportunities for recyclables. Check with your recycling coordinator to find out what is or is not accepted at your local recycling center and where to take items like yard waste, motor oil, car batteries, tires, appliances, etc.

3. Assess Your Situation



Consider the design and layout of your buildings and facilities and your residents' needs and demographics. Look in your dumpster and existing recycling bins. Talk to your residents. Here are a few things to think about:

What is in your waste stream?

What are your building logistics?

What are your recycling options?

What is being recycled now and how good a job are we doing?

What does your building need to make its recycling program most effective?

Case Study

Colonial View Apartments,
Older Adult Apartment Building
Sun Prairie, WI
Vicky Weier
(608) 837-3174

Recycling Program:

Residents place newspapers and magazines in one bin and co-mingle glass bottles and jars, steel and aluminum cans, and plastic containers in another bin. Cardboard is brought down to the maintenance room. Trash is still sent down the chute.

The maintenance staff empties the bins into wheeled carts provided by the hauler. This has become part of the daily routine and takes only about 15 minutes a day.

Savings:

Colonial View reduced the number of dumpsters and decreased the number of trash pick-ups from twice a week to once a week. With the removal of recyclables, the trash dumpster no longer fills up and overflows on weekends.

Waste Reduction & Recycling Suggestions:

Hold an annual meeting to review recycling procedures; take the opportunity to hand out a new recycling information flyer.

Words to the Wise:

"Repetition and re-education are necessary, especially with older adults. It's an ongoing process. The older generation is conscientious about laws, rules and the environment. By keeping the recycling process simple and your message positive, you will get results."

4. Work With Your Hauler

Your hauler's collection methods will affect how you design your recycling program. Their requirements for sorting and placing materials in outside bins and dumpsters will determine how you manage recycling inside the building.

Haulers can help answer the what, when, where and how of recycling preparation, separation and collection. If your residents and staff do not comply, the hauler may refuse to take your recyclables or risk getting the load rejected at the recycling facility.

If you have questions about the recycling advice or service a hauler is giving you, contact your responsible unit for guidance.

Questions to ask a hauler:

What types of materials do you accept?

How should the materials be prepared?

What kind of containers do you provide? If you do not provide them, where can they be purchased?

How often do you collect recyclables?

How do you handle contamination problems?

5. Select a Collection Method

Whether your hauler is from your responsible unit or is one with whom you contract, you may have several collection options.

Curbside Collection: A program where recyclable materials are collected on a regular basis at the curb, often using designated containers (bags or bins).

Outside Multi-Compartment Bin or Carts: Residents or staff place sorted recyclables in appropriate compartments in large bins or in appropriate carts at a centralized location on your grounds.

Outside Two-Compartment Bin or Two Separate Containers: One side of a bin or one container is used for newspaper, magazines and cardboard, the other for co-mingled glass bottles and jars, steel and aluminum cans, and plastic containers.

Drop-off: You may decide not to use a hauler and have your staff transport recyclables to a recycling or drop-off center. You'll still need bins or carts for residents to deposit sorted recyclables.

6. Select a Method for Residents to Collect and Sort Recyclables

Once you have selected a collection method, you'll need to choose a way for staff and residents to sort and collect recyclables in your building. Here are some suggestions:

Outside Drop-off Site: Residents bring recyclables to outside bins or carts.

Inside Drop-off Site: Residents bring recyclables to an inside storage area and maintenance staff transfer the material outside for a hauler to pick up. Check fire codes before selecting a location.

Inside Bin or Bag Pick-up: Residents are provided with a bin or bag for recyclables, which they place outside their apartment doors. Maintenance staff collects the recyclables and brings them to an inside or outside location for the hauler to pick up.

Garbage Chute: Existing garbage chutes are mainly used in high-rise buildings and can be modified to incorporate recycling. Computerized systems can transform a garbage chute into a recycling chute by the push of a button. Another option is using a different colored plastic bag for recyclable materials; sorting is then done by maintenance staff.

Since residents need to store recyclables in their apartment for a short period of time, they will need some kind of inside storage containers. You may want to provide them with boxes, bins or bags that match your inside and outside collection systems. These should be part of the apartment and stay with the unit upon lease termination.

Recycling Container Considerations

Recycling containers should be a different color than your garbage cans or dumpsters, and be clearly marked. Consider using illustrations along with text for children or non-English speaking residents.

Labels should be placed on the top ***and*** sides of the containers, so if one label is blocked, another can be seen.

Recycling and garbage containers should be easily accessible to all residents and child-safe. Avoid cumbersome, heavy lids that are difficult for older adults or younger children to manage. Make sure someone in a wheelchair or with impaired vision can use the containers.

All containers need to be compatible with the hauler's equipment.

All containers need to be weatherproof, as well as scavenger and vandal resistant.

All containers need to meet local fire codes.

Case Study

Northlawn Housing Development, Lower Income Housing Units Milwaukee, WI 53216

Mike Engelbart
(414) 286-2355

Recycling Program:

Each of the 49 Northlawn apartment buildings received two, 95-gallon carts – one for co-mingled glass bottles and jars, steel and aluminum cans, and plastic containers; the other for newspaper and magazines. Cardboard is either bundled and put next to the recycling cart or cut down and put in with the newspaper and magazines. Carts are placed at the rear of each apartment building adjacent to the parking spaces and are collected once a month by the city.

Savings:

No financial savings but big environmental savings; the whole complex has been cleaner since recycling was initiated.

Waste Reduction and Recycling Suggestions:

Educate residents; give them a reason to recycle.

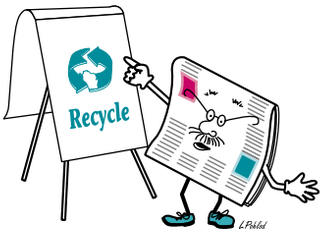
Designate someone with an interest in the environment as a residential coordinator to help collect recyclables and motivate other residents.

Words to the Wise:

"When working with residents with lower incomes, keep in mind that recycling is not their top priority. Making ends meet, and sometimes just making it through the day, are their top concerns. Somehow relate recycling back to them. Let them know they can make a difference and improve their immediate environment by recycling. They've got to know that what they're doing will help make the future better for their children."

7. Educate, Educate, Educate

The single most important factor in determining the success of a multi-family recycling program is awareness. Your staff and residents must know about the program to be able to participate. And according to the Law, you must educate your residents at move-in time and semi-annually thereafter. You'll need to tell residents and staff ***why*** they're recycling, ***what*** materials to recycle, ***how*** to prepare and sort materials, ***where*** to put their sorted materials, ***when*** to do this, and ***who*** to contact for more information. You can also include information on ways to reduce and reuse.



You'll probably focus most of your efforts on recycling newspaper, magazines, cardboard, glass bottles and jars, plastic containers, and steel and aluminum cans. However, items such as yardwaste, lead-acid batteries, used motor oil, appliances and tires must also be recycled. Let your residents know where they can take these materials (drop-off site, retailer or recycling center) and the hours of operation.

Many apartment owners use lease addenda, move-in packets, letters, flyers, door hangers, and newsletters to educate and keep their residents informed.

Don't forget to look at the demographics of the residents in your building and consider translating recycling information into other languages. Your local recycling coordinator or local library may be able to help you.

8. Monitor the Program and Provide Feedback

Once you have your recycling program up and running, there's still more to do. You need to monitor the program and provide feedback, both positive and negative, to residents and staff. Take immediate action to correct problems. Provide positive feedback for good performance.

Case Study

Leo Drive Apartments, Two 8-Unit Apartment Buildings Madison, WI

Leigh Hanson, Owner
(608) 222-1510

Recycling Program:

Each apartment resident receives a lease addendum that contains recycling information. The lease addendum is ***read out loud*** at the time of lease signing, providing an opportunity for questions and discussion. New residents are also given written recycling instructions and asked to sign a recycling compliance form. In addition, residents have the option of purchasing MadisonPride recycling bags and placing their recyclables at the curbside, as well as composting food scraps and lawn cuttings.

Residents are provided with three containers – one for trash; one for cardboard, magazines and newspapers; and one for co-mingled glass bottles and jars, plastic containers, and steel and aluminum cans.

Savings:

Due to recycling, Leo Drive Apartments went to a smaller dumpster with fewer garbage pick-ups; garbage disposal costs were reduced by 20 percent. This covered the cost of recycling and allowed the program to be implemented at no extra expense.

Waste Reduction & Recycling Suggestions:

Include recycling articles and information in a newsletter to keep residents educated and aware of their responsibilities and their stake in the earth's future.

Develop and maintain a positive relationship with your residents. If they respect you and like where they live, they will cooperate.

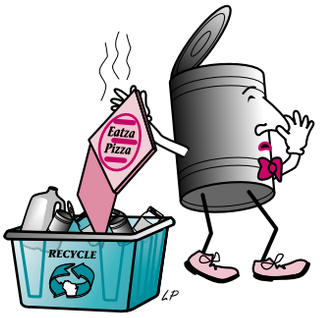
Tell residents the dumpsters "belong" to them; they pay for the trash and recycling services with their rent.

Ask residents to report non-resident use to the owner/manager; the policing by residents serves the owner (and residents) by keeping the cost in line with legitimate use.

Tell all incoming residents, "Our residents recycle; we are proud of them!"

Words to the Wise:

"Probably the single most important factor in any relationship is the quality and quantity of communication. Informing new residents of your deep and concerned interest in our environment lets them know where you stand at the beginning. Good owner-resident relations from start to finish will elicit 99.9% cooperation in any endeavor, including recycling. People care about our environment and want to do what's right, especially if you make it easy and convenient for them. As an owner/manager, you can go a long way in providing education and encouragement if you have a good, caring relationship with the few who are not moved to recycle."



9. Deal with Contamination

Contamination occurs when recyclables are not properly cleaned or sorted and when garbage or a non-compatible material gets mixed in with them. If this happens the rest of the materials in the container can be ruined and the hauler could reject your load. Also, your responsible unit has the option of using citations or penalties if your recyclables are not properly handled or prepared.

Periodically check your recycling containers for contamination. Tell your residents and staff about contaminants, why they are a problem, and what needs to be done to remedy it. Post a note by the mailboxes or in other high traffic areas. If you know who's responsible for the contamination, leave a note under their door or use a preprinted card.

10. Reward Recycling Efforts

To encourage better participation in your program, try to recognize and reward your residents for their recycling efforts by:

- Presenting certificates of appreciation or writing a personal letter
- Telling residents, staff and volunteers how many pounds of recyclables have been collected or the percent decrease in garbage.
- Rewarding recycling residents with recycled products such as stationery, toilet paper, paper towels, ceramic mugs, etc.
- Buying recycled products for use around the building or complex.
- Giving rent rebates for volunteers.
- Holding a picnic for residents
- Purchasing picnic tables or some other outdoor furniture with money saved made from recycling efforts (made from recycled plastic!)

Waste Reduction • Recycling • Pollution Prevention Assistance

For more information on recycling and waste reduction, contact the waste management or recycling specialists at these DNR Regional Offices:

Eau Claire	715/839-3700
Green Bay	920/492-5800
Madison	608/275-3266
Milwaukee	414/263-8500
Rhinelander	715/365-8900
Spooner	715/635-2101

Or, refer to the "Waste Reduction and Recycling, People to Contact in Wisconsin" fact sheet on the following DNR website: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/contacts/recycle.htm

Beyond Recycling

Your role in recycling does not have to stop at the recycling receptacle. Take recycling to the next level by buying recycled products, reducing waste, reusing items and shopping with the environment in mind.

Case Studies

Special thanks for the interest and efforts of those featured in our case studies:

Mike Engelbart, Northlawn Housing Development, Milwaukee

Leigh Hanson, Leo Drive Apartments, Madison

Vicky Weier, Colonial View Apartments, Sun Prairie

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PUB- CE-284 2002

GP5/02