

# Fact Sheet



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY • ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE DIVISION • 1-800-662-9278

## Reducing Office Paper Waste



Many businesses and institutions are discovering that they can reduce disposal costs, save paper costs, earn money, and preserve our natural resources by reducing, reusing, and recycling office paper.

### TYPES OF OFFICE PAPER THAT CAN BE RECYCLED

Virtually all types of office paper can be recycled. Office paper is typically divided into two grades: high-grade and mixed. High-grade paper typically consists of white or off-white paper such as:

- *letterhead*
- *tablet paper*
- *bond copier paper*
- *typing paper*
- *notepad or scratch paper*

High-grade paper is a specialized and particularly "clean" grade of office paper. Carbon paper, glossy paper, heavily-inked paper, tape, plastic, cardboard, newsprint, and similar items are contaminants and must be avoided.

Mixed paper, also known as file stock, is a collection of several grades of paper including some grades that are not acceptable for bond quality recycled paper. Mixed paper has lower marketing value than high-grade paper. However, there is demand for it in the manufacture of consumer tissue products. The advantage of recycling mixed paper is that less attention to compatibility of paper types is necessary. Typically, mixed office paper includes nearly all paper generated in an office, and may even include limited amounts of:

- *colored paper*
- *business forms*
- *manila folders*
- *carbon paper*
- *envelopes with clear plastic windows and pressure-sensitive adhesive flaps*

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Newspapers (with glossy inserts removed) and corrugated cardboard containers are frequently found in office areas. While they can be recycled, these

materials should be separated from high-grade and mixed office paper.

Check with your recycler to make sure you know what papers are considered “high grade” and which are “mixed.” Your recycler will also tell you what other papers may be recyclable.

All plastic and personal trash must be separated from office paper designated for recycling.

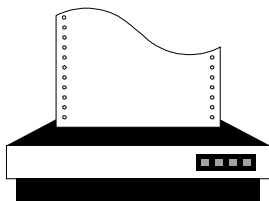
### **REDUCING OFFICE PAPER AT THE SOURCE**

Your office can reduce the amount of paper it uses by:

- Using a single space format for the text of final reports.

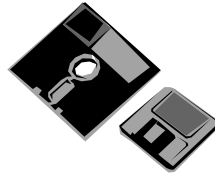
- Printing only the amount needed.

Limit the distribution of correspondence and reports to those who really need paper copies. Provide one copy for several readers rather than multiple copies.



- Limiting computer printouts. Use electronic mail for sending and receiving business messages. Review

text on the computer screen to limit mistakes on drafts.



- Storing information on computer disks instead of paper copies.

- Minimizing the use of colored, glossy, and special thickness papers that are difficult to recycle.

- Using reusable or two-way envelopes to mail your letters.

- Actively encouraging all employees to use less paper.

### **REUSING OFFICE PAPER**

Many offices make sure that their paper is fully utilized. This usually requires a bit of creativity and extra time, but will cut your paper use and paper waste by half.



- Use both sides of the page. Draft reports can be printed on once-used paper and reports can be printed back-to-back.

- Set aside special cartridges of “draft” paper for printers and copy machines.

- Convert scratch paper into memo pads, telephone answering slips, and similar items.



## RECYCLING OFFICE PAPER

Beyond reducing the amount of paper used, many offices establish recycling programs to divert paper from the wastebasket. Office paper recycling programs are relatively easy to set up, especially if you follow these steps:

### Step 1. Appoint a Recycling Coordinator

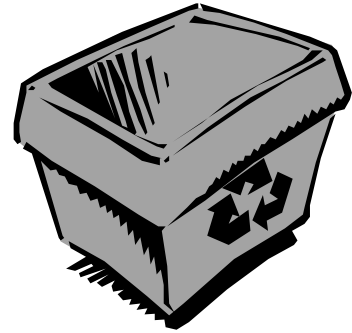


The first step in setting up a paper recycling program is to appoint a recycling coordinator. This person should do the necessary research; design the recycling

program; implement and manage the program; and be a liaison between management, employees, and outside recyclers. Specific responsibilities of the coordinator frequently include:

- Developing a plan of action with measurable goals and a feasible timetable.
- Representing and promoting the program to both management and employees.
- Obtaining management authorization to purchase needed equipment and supplies and for negotiating contracts with recyclers and brokers.
- Informing employees about the recycling system and their roles in the project.

- Working with haulers and recycling markets.
- Designing the collection system to be used.
- Identifying and ordering collection, storage, and equipment needs.
- Monitoring program results to identify and resolve problems.
- Listening to and evaluating feedback from management and employees.
- Reporting the results of the recycling program.



Generally, businesses select one person to serve as recycling coordinator, although several individuals are likely to help in overall planning and implementation. The initial efforts may necessitate that the recycling coordinator spend considerable time away from normal job assignments. Once the program is established, time demands will decrease and stabilize.

**Step 2. Determine What is Recyclable**

Learn what types and quantities of paper are in the office waste stream.

**Step 3. Identify the Markets**

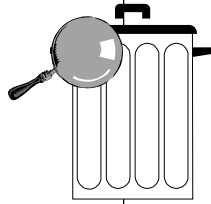
Contact potential recycling markets. Determine the recyclers' prices and services. Learn about restrictions on contaminants and establish an acceptable schedule for pickup. Seek outside technical assistance from consultants, waste haulers, local and state government, and local recycling businesses to help you with terminology, pricing, and markets.

**Step 4. Design the Recycling Program**

In cooperation with management and employees, design the recycling program. As part of this step, the coordinator should target specific paper grades for recycling, identify the types of containers needed and identify the program's personnel requirements. The coordinator should also be prepared to "sell" the program to management and employees.

Most office paper recycling systems follow a three-part process:

- ⇒ Employees put paper into recycling containers. These recycling containers may be at employee desks and/or in more centralized locations.
- ⇒ Custodial personnel transport paper from recycling containers to recycling dumpsters at the building's loading dock or waste area.
- ⇒ A designated hauler empties the recycling dumpsters and hauls the paper to a recycling facility.



There are many variations within this basic approach. Some offices have employees transfer paper from desktop to centralized containers. Other offices have custodial personnel empty desktop containers as well as centralized containers. Since most office waste is paper, some offices further encourage recycling by limiting trash containers.

Other office paper recycling tips include:

- Containers should be well-marked and labeled clearly with recycling do's and don'ts. This provides a continual prompt for employees to recycle.
- Individual employees should separate their own paper from waste, rather than relying on custodial staff.
- Consider compacting or baling paper on site. A cubic yard of "stacked" office paper is equivalent to approximately 300 pounds.
- Store recovered paper in a dry location.

**Step 5. Implement the Program**

The keys to successful program implementation are acceptance, education, and promotion. To encourage and maintain participation, consider the following:



- Send a "kickoff" memo, signed by top management to all employees. The memo should explain the program's operating procedures and indicate that

program success depends upon full cooperation of all employees.

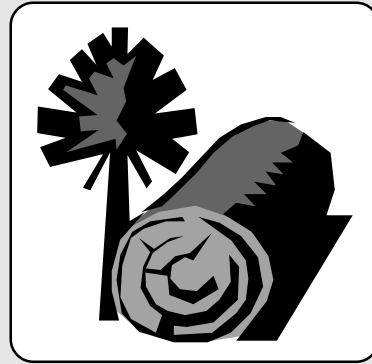
- Hold meetings with management and all relevant employees to explain program objectives and operating procedures. Answer questions about the program and explain how recycling will benefit the company and its staff. Provide literature explaining the need for resource conservation, waste reduction, and an end to throw-away habits. Solicit employee volunteers to help watch for contamination in recycling bins.
- Place posters throughout the facility explaining operating procedures for recycling. Include the name and telephone number of the recycling coordinator so that questions can be easily addressed.
- Prepare an article on the recycling program for the office or company newsletter.

**Step 6. Monitor the Program**

The coordinator should observe operating procedures, watching for undesired contaminants in recycled paper collection containers. Educate new employees. As the recycling practices become ingrained in most employees, the program will proceed smoothly.

**Step 7. Follow-up**

The recycling coordinator should start gathering quantity data when the first pick-up of recycled paper is made. Maintain a log of pounds of recycled materials shipped from the facility and monies received for the materials. Publicize this information on bulletin boards and/or in the office or company newsletter so that both management and employees will know how the program is progressing.



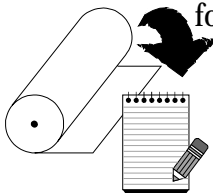
**Did You Know...**

- A typical business office generates about 1.5 pounds of wastepaper per employee per day.
- Financial businesses generate over 2 pounds per employee per day.
- Nearly half of typical office paper waste is comprised of high grade office paper, for which there is strong recycling demand.
- It is possible to significantly decrease the costs of buying office paper by reducing paper use and reusing the paper you have.
- Eliminating office paper from your waste stream can cut your waste bill by 50 percent or more.
- Recycling one ton of paper typically saves \$25 to \$30 in landfill disposal costs and about 6.7 cubic yards of landfill space.
- Commercial and residential paper waste accounts for over 40 percent of waste currently being landfilled.
- Every recycled ton of paper saves approximately 17 trees. Also, it saves approximately 462 gallons of oil.
- Recycling paper reduces the air and water pollution from paper manufacturing.

Publicity on paper recycling should include information on how monies received from paper recycling are being used (i.e. for recreational and educational programs). It is important that employees know what direct benefits are received from recycling.

**Use Recycled Paper**

The collection of office paper is only a part of the recycling loop. Paper collected for recycling must be manufactured into marketable products to complete the loop. For most office applications, recycled paper can be directly substituted for paper made with "virgin" fibers. By purchasing and using recycled paper, your business can help to complete the recycling loop.



# Buy Recycled Products.

*They're Worth Our Environment*

If every business used recycled paper, both demand and price for office paper collected for recycling would increase. In return, the cost of purchasing recycled paper will decrease.

State of Michigan offices are required to use at least 50 percent recycled paper. Federal government and state government offices in other states use recycled office paper. Wide participation by the private sector is needed to make a significant impact on our environment.



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