



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDY:

# MACON COUNTY - SWAP SHOP

Jurisdiction:

Macon County

Best Management Practice:

Swap Shop

Purpose:

to help deter the amount of reusable materials sent to the landfill. Swap shops provide an efficient, cost-effective system where citizens in a community can exchange reusable items

Ordinance:

None

Contact:

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## DESCRIPTION

In 2000, Macon County built a 12' by 12' shed for a swap shop, using salvaged timber wood recovered from the county's C&D landfill for the frame and siding. The swap shop is located at one of the county's 11 convenience centers. The convenience center site attendant is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the swap shop, which includes ensuring that only acceptable items remain in the shed.

Citizens who want to use the swap shop for either dropping off or picking up materials must first obtain the key from the site attendant. The swap shop accepts clothing, shoes, toys, fully functional appliances, and furniture in usable condition. Broken items and chemical products are never accepted. To prevent the swap shop from becoming overly crowded and cluttered, there is a limit of five items that can be dropped off per person per trip, with no limit to the number of items that people can pick up.

## IMPLEMENTATION

To construct the shed for the swap shop, the county's Solid Waste staff salvaged timber wood for the frame and siding from the county's C&D landfill. The only materials purchased by the county were shingles for the roof and hinges for the doors. The county hired a contractor to construct the facility using the reclaimed materials. The cost to implement the swap shop program, including the construction of the building and the purchase of all signage, was approximately \$8,000. Once the shed was complete, the Division of Solid Waste Management initially advertised the program in the county newspaper. Signs on the swap shop building indicate acceptable items and procedures for both dropping off and picking up materials.

Although the system is now running smoothly, the Solid Waste staff faced some challenges in the program's beginning stages. It originated as an open-shed system (with no lock on the door), which made the program very labor intensive for convenience center staff due to the amount of unacceptable items being dropped off on a regular basis. This cluttered the swap shop, making it a less effective system of exchange as well as taking up a great deal of staff time to remove such materials. In fact, the Solid Waste Management Department felt it had to find a way to improve the system (decrease the amount of unacceptable items delivered) in order for the program to continue. In response to this problem, the recycling coordinator installed a lock on the swap shop door and provided a key to the convenience center site attendant.

Citizens must now first obtain the key from the site attendant to both drop off and pick up materials. The site attendant is responsible for screening what people are bringing to the swap shop and rejecting unacceptable items when necessary. This system has significantly reduced the maintenance time required for upkeep of the swap shop and has created a more efficient system for exchanging reusable materials.

## RESULTS

Initially, the success of the program was questionable due to the amount of staff time required to deal with disposal of unacceptable items. However, these problems were eliminated after installation of the lock on the shed door. In addition, the recycling coordinator has observed no decrease in usage of the swap since the lock system was implemented. Although no quantitative data is available on the exact amount of materials that have been reused through this system, the county recycling coordinator has observed a high rate of exchange and also that the swap shop seems very popular among citizens.

