

HOW TO: CREATE A COMPANY RECYCLING PROGRAM

Involve your employees to find ways to reduce waste and recycle, even if your landlord doesn't offer any services related to recycling

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Having a recycling program at your business is not just good for the environment. In some cases in Mecklenburg County, it is also the law.

The county's Source Separation Ordinance requires that nearly every business that generates 16 cubic yards or more of waste per week to recycle office paper and cardboard.

And the state's Alcohol Beverage Commission Mandatory Recycling Law requires all establishments with an ABC license to recycle glass, plastic and aluminum beverage containers.

If your business falls under those regulations — or if you voluntarily want to recycle — Mecklenburg County has an array of services to help you.

You can go online to www.wipeoutwaste.com for information on how and what to recycle. And the Web site also includes a comprehensive list of haulers and companies that buy a range of waste materials.

Much of the information on the county site is available in a booklet titled *Resource Guide for Commercial Waste Reduction and Recycling*. To request a copy, call (704) 432-3200.

Call the same number if you want someone from Mecklenburg Recycling to come to your business to talk to your employees about setting up a program. The county also can help you if your landlord is responsible for trash pick-up but does not require recycling.

"Not only does recycling help you avoid tipping fees, but depending on what materials you have, there can be money to be made," says Gail Thomas, senior environ-



photo GREG RUSSELL

It's crucial to communicate with employees about recycling and to get their input, says Chris Johnson of The FWA Group, Architects.

mental specialist with the county's solid waste department. "You're also showing corporate responsibility, and it instills a sense of pride in employees."

The county's Stewart Espey, senior environmental specialist for business/commercial recycling, says management support is a key to a program's success.

"Without it, the program won't work," he says. "You need a champion to promote it."

Many companies appoint an employee committee to fulfill that role.

But the most important step, Espey says, is education. "You need to let your staff know what materials are

TOPTIPS

- **Call** Mecklenburg Recycling at (704) 432-3200 or go to www.wipeoutwaste.com for detailed information on how to set up a recycling program at your company.

- **Set up** a recycling or sustainability committee of employees to help keep the program going.

- **Recognize** there are ways to maintain a recycling program even if your landlord handles your trash collection but doesn't recycle.

being recycled and what containers they go into. Many times, once waste is contaminated, the hauler will throw it in the regular trash and not tell you."

Education isn't a one-time effort.

"It's definitely an ongoing process," says Chris Johnson, a project designer with The FWA Group, Architects in Charlotte. "People become complacent or they forget."

Johnson heads his company's sustainability committee, and he and a co-worker regularly send e-mails to remind employees what materials are to be recycled and the proper places to dispose of them.

They also seek input from fellow workers about which materials they want to recycle and for creative ways to reduce waste.

FWA recently moved into its own building on East Boulevard, relocating from a high-rise uptown. No recycling was available through the previous landlord, so taking beverage containers to a recycling center was incorporated into the weekly kitchen duties shared by the staff. Now a hauler takes all of FWA's separated materials.

As an architectural firm, the company uses lots of paper. Instead of directly recycling all of its waste paper, employees take it to schools for students to use. And caterers for the firm's weekly lunch-and-learn sessions have stopped bringing plastic dinnerware and utensils, and drinks are served in ceramic mugs and glasses.

"Reducing waste is as important as recycling," Johnson says.

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