



A CHECKLIST FOR

Office Sustainability

The following list covers a wide range of waste prevention and cost reduction items in a typical office environment. Because offices vary in so many ways, it is not possible to cover all money saving items in a single general list. The following list is designed to be a reminder of what to look for when conducting waste management and waste reduction activities that can improve performance and reduce operating costs.

Paper Usage

- Are fax machines set to not print cover sheets?
- Are printers set to not print banner sheets?
- Is there two-sided coping?
- Is there two-sided printing?
- Is there usage of e-mail instead of paper correspondence?
- Is there usage of clean scrap one-sided paper for memos, draft printing and informal hard copies of documents?
- What is the recycled content of office paper products such as copy paper, folders, post-it notes, envelopes, etc.?
- Are there forms or documents made and/or used electronically?
- Do documents exist in paper form that can be converted into an electronic format?

Equipment Usage

Computers

- Does enough capacity exist to use electronic documents and forms and to store e-mail memos?
- Is there an in-house computer troubleshooter who can keep problems from delaying productivity?
- Can computers be updated to extend their useful life, rather than be recycled or consigned to surplus?
- Is there a policy to replace computers with energy efficient models?
- Is computer packaging and boxing recycled or reused?

Replacement policy

- Does a policy exist, and if so, how does it work?
- Has the leasing of machines been explored?
- Is an energy efficient alternative available?
- Are too many machines in use?

Maintenance and cleaning practices

- How often are repairs needed?
- Are employees trained on equipment operating and troubleshooting or do they learn by trial and error?
- Is a machine used beyond its design capacity?
- Does enough ventilation exist for the electronic equipment?
- Do operating problems (jams, broken/torn material, misprinting, etc.) exist?

Usage patterns

- Is equipment located appropriately to avoid high traffic areas and the potential for work bottlenecks?
- Does noise pollution from equipment located near offices slow productivity?
- Are worktables or places to put things in place in areas where copiers or printers are located?
- How many people use one machine in favor of another, and why does this happen?

Recycling and Reuse

- Are employees made aware of recycling policies and opportunities?
- Are signs used as reminders?
- Is recycling awareness part of new employee orientation?
- Do experienced employees set a good example for new employees?
- Do employees have a source of information to check on recycling policies and opportunities?

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Buy recycled/environmentally preferable purchasing

- Are you buying recycled office supplies and other materials?
- Are you specifying recycled content materials when you place an order?
- Are your employees educated regarding the advantages of closing the loop and recycled content preferencing?
- Are product durability and life span considered on top of the initial cost?
- Are you minimizing the number of sharable items (one paper cutter, one laminator, a couple of staplers, etc.) that your office purchases for individuals?

Paper

- Are recycling centers in place and convenient to use?
- Are there recycling containers near copiers, printers, etc.?
- Are there recycling boxes in each office?
- Is there an office paper recycling policy?
- Are there alternatives for paper types not picked up (windowed envelopes, waxed papers)?
- What are local fire code requirements?

Cardboard

- Is cardboard recycled?
- How much cardboard is found in the trash?
- Are boxes available/suitable for reuse?
- Can suppliers take cardboard back?
- Can suppliers use alternative packaging materials?
- Can other nearby offices use cardboard?

Bottles and cans

- Are bottles and/or cans recycled? Does a vendor exist for these recyclables?
- Are bottles and/or cans found in the trash?
- Can employees avoid using single-serve bottles and/or cans in the office?
- Does the local government have an ordinance on the disposal of bottles and cans?
- Are there local organizations (Boy Scouts, schools, etc.) who will take bottles and cans?
- Is there storage for recycling?

Plastic

- Is plastic recycled?
- Is there storage for plastic?
- How much plastic is found in the trash?
- Can suppliers take the plastic back?
- Can suppliers use an alternative packaging material?
- Does the office have a use for the plastic, or can a nearby office use the plastic?

Equipment and white goods

- Are white goods recycled? (Refrigerators, hot water heaters, desks, etc.)
- Can they be surplused or traded for reuse?
- Can they be a tax deductible donation to charity?

Office supplies salvage

- Is there a policy of salvaging office supplies when an office is vacated?
- Are salvaged/recycled office supplies be used before new items are bought?
- Are office supplies purchased with reuse/recycling taken into account?

Trash disposal - what is being disposed of? (look in dumpster)

- Look in dumpster – what is being disposed? Note all recyclable items.
- Ask what unidentified items of any volume are and figure the recycling potential.
- Ask what trash volume is – how many dumpsters, pulls per week, what cost per pull?
- Note kinds of trash and its potential hazards.

Utilities

Utility bill supervision

- Are utility bills handled by the office or included in your lease payment?
- How are bills reviewed for accuracy?
- Are records kept to follow costs and changes in bills?
- Is there an energy policy?

Lighting practices, replacement and tube disposal

- Is lighting adequate?
- How is lighting changed? Are bulbs disposed of lawfully?
- Is lighting cleaned every few years to maintain brightness?
- Are alternative light sources (skylights, windows, solar tubes, etc.) used?
- Is lighting calculated as part of heating and cooling?
- How much does it cost to operate lighting?
- Are EXIT signs an energy efficient type? Are EXIT signs expired or out of date?

Thermostat controls, calibration and tune ups

- Is there zone control?
- Are controls automated or manually set?
- Is heat gain for time of day taken into account? (Curtains left open in bright sun, etc.)
- Are controls calibrated every few years?
- Are systems serviced or cleaned regularly?

Filter cleaning

- How often are filters cleaned? (include HVAC systems, laboratory systems, air return, outside air, bathroom ventilation, water cooler, ice machine, iceboxes, etc.)
- Who checks and cleans filters?
- Are filters replaced correctly and are they of proper size?

Window control for solar gain and lighting

- Is there a window policy?
- Can windows be opened?
- Who is charged with ensuring correct window status?
- Who looks after window to ensure curtains are open or closed at proper times?

Water waste and cost control

- Is there a water use policy?
- How much water is used and how much does it cost?
- Are there inspections for leaking faucets or toilets or other water use machines?
- Are water bills tracked to notice any abnormal changes?
- Are heating and cooling system water traps maintained?
- Are ice machines and water coolers designed to use "one-time-through" cooling water or is cooling water recycled?

HVAC cleaning and maintenance

- Are heating and air conditioning systems maintained regularly? By contractor or in-house?
- Are zone controls in use to adjust different building zones as conditions change during the day?
- Are all filters and water traps maintained properly?
- Are heat exchanger and coils cleaned regularly?
- Are costs of operation tracked to note performance and cost changes?

Janitorial services control

- Who controls janitorial services: office or landlord?
- Is janitorial staff trained and supervised to comply with recycling/reuse policy?
- Does janitorial staff have authority to initiate waste minimization practices in areas such as selection of cleaning supplies and towels?

Outside landscaping

- Is energy efficient lighting used?
- Are hydro-efficient or xeriscaping plants used?
- Do water reuse possibilities exist?

- Are sensors used to prevent spray irrigation during periods of rain?
- Does irrigation occur at more efficient times than during the heat of the day?
- Are wise chemical practices used to prevent liabilities for exposure to people or overuse that leads to storm runoff?

Office Sustainability Practices

Turning unused computers and machines off

- Are employees trained and reminded about turning machines and computers off to save thousands of kWhs of electricity over nights, weekends and holidays?
- Are time intervals calculated so employees know when it is economical to turn off unused lights, machines and computers?

Establishing a trade network with other offices

- Is there a policy in place for surplus equipment or supplies?
- Does a mechanism exist to share surplus with other offices?
- Is there a list available to employees on where to find used equipment or surplus from other offices or sources?
- Are employees supported and authorized to practice reuse policies for materials and equipment?

Employee encouragement and ideas

- Are employees encouraged to come up with money-saving and/or pollution prevention ideas?
- Do employees have a mechanism to present ideas to management (i.e. suggestion box)?
- Are there incentives for finding money-saving and/or pollution preventing ideas?



The Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA) provides technical and other nonregulatory assistance to reduce the amount of waste released into the air and water and on the land. DPPEA emphasizes waste reduction through pollution prevention and encourages companies and government agencies to go beyond compliance.

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