

# PRO P **FACT** Sheet

## Office Paper Reduction and Recycling

Office paper can be a challenge to deal with. Even as we move to a more paperless society, we are still bombarded with letters, memos and other documents on a daily basis. The tips below will help you reduce, reuse and recycle the office paper that comes across your desk everyday.

### *Paper Reduction*

- Perform a waste basket audit to evaluate the potential for an office recycling program.
- Purchase only the quantity of supplies needed, especially letterhead, envelopes and business cards. Overpurchasing these items can lead to disposing of out-of-date items.
- Ask suppliers to reduce unnecessary packaging and to offer recycled paper products.
- Limit computer printouts. Use email wherever possible to send and receive business messages. Review text on your computer to avoid printing draft copies.
- Minimize the use of difficult-to-recycle papers, such as colored, glossy and special thickness.
- Use reusable or two-way envelopes to send inter-office correspondence.
- Make double sided copies. Develop a policy to copy reports, letters, memos and other documents on two sides rather than one to conserve paper. Purchase or lease copiers designed to copy on both sides without jamming or malfunctioning.
- Cut down on the amount of paper you use for memos. Place memos on central bulletin boards for everyone to read or use. Routing slips also provide a record of who has received and acknowledged a memo.
- Keep mailing lists current.
- Maintain central files instead of having multiple sets of the same file. This option not only saves paper, but it also reduces the time, space and money spent on filing.
- Actively encourage employees to use less paper in their everyday tasks.
- Maintain copiers, computers and other equipment to not only minimize scrap generation but to also prolong the life of these machines.



### *Paper Reuse*

- Encourage reuse of paper for scrap. Employees can put old paper in bins and reuse it for memos, messages and calculations. Reuse of scrap paper incurs virtually no added costs and saves on both disposal fees and the cost of new paper.
- Set aside special trays in copy machines for draft paper. Use the blank side of already used paper for drafts.
- Convert scratch paper into memo pads, telephone answering slips and similar items.

## Paper Recycling

Almost all types of paper used in the office can be recycled. It can be separated into various types, ranging from high grade to several low grades. High grade papers generally include, but are not limited to, white computer paper, bond, letterhead and ledger. Lower grades may include mixed grades, file stock, ground wood papers, newsprint and colored paper.

Mixed paper is generally considered low grade even if it contains high grade paper. Easily identifiable high grade papers should be kept separate to take advantage of its higher market value.

Office paper recycling programs can be challenging to maintain. High turnover, variability in generation, a difficult custodial staff and uncooperative haulers can hurt even the most well-intentioned programs.

Despite these challenges, many programs do well because they follow a few important principles including the following:

- Educate staff so they know what is expected and where things go. Communicate frequently with your staff so they know what is expected of them. Let everyone know that they are important in reducing contamination and increasing diversion.
- Place clearly marked containers in high traffic areas and other sensible locations. Place paper recycling bins next to trash receptacles where both are generated. Paper containers should also be placed near copiers, printers and fax machines.
- Reduce contamination by choosing specially designed containers. Paper only containers have slotted openings that make it difficult to throw trash or beverage containers in the bin.
- Boost employee participation through incentives, training and clever promotions.



### Close the Loop - Buy Recycled

Perhaps most importantly, buy recycled paper and office products. In large quantities particularly, recycled paper is competitive with virgin fiber. Insist that your paper vendor carry paper with at least 30% post consumer content. If you have a hard time finding the recycled paper you need, consider joining a purchasing cooperative or an on-line option like [www.buyrecycledfirst.com](http://www.buyrecycledfirst.com).

*This fact sheet was developed by the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania, P.O. Box 25, Bellwood, PA 16617. For more information, visit our website, [www.proprecycles.org](http://www.proprecycles.org), or contact us by email at [prop@proprecycles.org](mailto:prop@proprecycles.org). We do our part to close the recycling loop and print all our publications on recycled paper.*