

## The Problem Is Too Much Trash

Each year, Columbus citizens generate over 355 thousand tons of trash. Reducing the waste stream by just one percent can amount to about 3600 tons of trash each year.

## Making Source Reduction Work

Individual consumers can help alleviate the mounting trash problem by making environmentally aware decisions about everyday things like shopping and caring for the lawn.

Putting source reduction into practice is likely to require change in our daily routines. Changing habits does not mean a return to a more difficult lifestyle. If we do not reduce waste, the economic and social costs of waste disposal will continue to increase. Individuals can evaluate their daily waste-producing activities to determine those that are essential (such as choosing medicines and foods packaged for safety and health), and those that are not (such as throwing away glass or plastic jars that could be reused or locally recycled).

## Waste Reduction: A Basic Solution

Waste reduction is waste prevention. It includes many actions that reduce the overall amount or toxicity of waste created. Waste reduction can conserve resources, reduce pollution and help cut waste disposal and handling costs by avoiding the costs of recycling, composting, and landfilling. Because source reduction prevents the generation of waste, it comes before other management options that deal with trash after it is already generated. After waste reduction, recycling (and composting) are the preferred waste management options because they reduce the amount of waste going to the landfills and conserve resources.

## Waste Reduction Tips

### Reducing the amount of packaging.

Because packaging materials account for one-third of the trash we generate, they provide a good opportunity for reducing waste.

- ▶ When choosing between two similar products, select the one with the least unnecessary packaging.
- ▶ At the grocery, purchase items such as tomatoes, garlic and mushrooms unpackaged. Remember that wrenches, screwdrivers, nails and other hardware are available in loose bins.
- ▶ Use products you already have on hand to do household chores (e.g., use your plunger instead of purchasing a drain cleaner).
- ▶ Recognize and support managers that stock products with no packaging or reduced packaging. Let clerks know when it is not necessary to double wrap a purchase.
- ▶ Purchase large or economy-sized household products such as laundry soap, pet food and cat litter. These sizes usually have less packaging per unit of product.
- ▶ Whenever possible, select grocery, hardware, and household items that are available in bulk. Bulk merchandise also may be shared with friends or neighbors.
- ▶ Buy concentrated products. They often require less packaging, less energy to transport to the store, and save money and natural resources.

### Adopt practices to reduce waste toxicity.

In addition to reducing the amount of materials in the solid waste stream, reducing hazardous products is important too.

- ▶ Use nonhazardous or less hazardous household products to accomplish your tasks. Instead of pesticides, plant marigolds in your garden to keep certain pests away. In some cases, you may be using less toxic chemicals to do a job, and in others, you may use some physical methods, such as sandpaper, scouring pads, or just a little more elbow grease to achieve the same results.
- ▶ Use alternatives to household products that contain hazardous substances. Some products around your house can be used to do the same job as products with hazardous components. For example, as a glass cleaner mix 1 tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice to 1 quart of water.
- ▶ If you need to use products with hazardous substances, use only the amount you need. Share leftover materials with neighbors or donate to a business, charity or, with used motor oil, recycled at a participating service station. Never put hazardous materials in food or beverage containers.
- ▶ Read and follow all directions on the product labels and store safely away from children and pets.



### Consider Reusable Products

Many products and containers are designed to be reusable (used more than once), resulting in less waste.

- ▶ Durable items such as a mug, cup, utensils, tableware, cloth napkins, sponges or dishcloths can be washed and used again.
- ▶ Look for products available in refillable containers, that can either be refilled or reused by the consumer or the manufacturer.
- ▶ Use rechargeable batteries to help reduce garbage and keep toxic metals out of the solid waste stream.
- ▶ At work, use “recharged” cartridges for laser printers, copiers and fax machines.

### Maintain and repair durable products.

If maintained or repaired, products will not have to be thrown away and replaced as frequently.

- ▶ Buy long-lasting appliances and electronic equipment with high consumer satisfaction, low breakdown rates and good warranties.
- ▶ Keep appliances in good working order by following proper operation and maintenance.
- ▶ Mend clothing instead of throwing it out.
- ▶ Choose furniture, luggage, sporting goods, toys, and tools that hold up to vigorous use.
- ▶ Use long-lasting, low-energy fluorescent light bulbs rather than incandescent ones.
- ▶ To extend the life of car, bicycle and other vehicle tires, check tire pressure once a month, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for upkeep and rotate the tires routinely.

### Reuse bags, containers, and other items.

Everyday items can have more than one use. Reusing products extends their lives, keeping them out of the solid waste stream longer.

- ▶ Reuse paper and plastic bags and twist ties.
- ▶ Reuse scrap paper and envelopes. Use both sides of a piece of paper for writing notes before recycling it. Save and reuse gift boxes, ribbons, wrapping and tissue paper. Save packaging, colored paper, egg cartons and other items for reuse or for arts and crafts projects.
- ▶ Find other uses or homes for old draperies, bedding, clothing, towels and cotton diapers. Then cut up what is left for use as patchwork, rags, doll clothes, rag rugs, or other projects.
- ▶ Reuse newspaper, brown paper bags, boxes, packaging “peanuts,” and “bubble wrap” to ship packages.
- ▶ Wash and reuse empty glass and plastic jars, milk jugs, coffee cans, dairy tubs and other similar containers to store leftovers as well as buttons, nails, thumbtacks, etc.
- ▶ Turn used lumber into birdhouses, mailboxes, compost bins, or other projects.

### Borrow, rent, or share items.

- ▶ Rent or borrow party decorations and supplies such as tables, chairs, centerpieces, linens, dishes, and silverware.
- ▶ Pool resources with neighbors to form “banks” to share tools or equipment.
- ▶ Instead of throwing them away offer old tools, camera equipment or other goods to friends, relatives, neighbors or community groups.
- ▶ Share newspapers and magazines with others and reduce generating waste paper.

### Sell or donate goods instead of throwing them out.

- ▶ Donate or resell items to thrift stores or other organizations in need. These organizations typically take everything from clothes and textiles to appliances and furniture.
- ▶ Conduct a food or clothing drive to help others. Encourage area merchants to donate damaged goods or food items that are still edible to food banks, shelters, and other groups that care for the needy.
- ▶ Sell secondhand items at fairs, bazaars, swap meets, and garage sales.



### Educate others on source reduction and recycling practices. Make your preferences known to manufacturers, merchants, and community leaders.

- ▶ Write to companies to encourage them to reduce unnecessary packaging and the use of hazardous components in products. Also, let companies know when they have made positive changes.
- ▶ Encourage the use of efficient long lasting equipment
- ▶ Encourage the use of reusable, recycled and recyclable materials in the workplace.
- ▶ Urge schools to provide environmental education and to teach about source reduction, recycling and composting.

### Be creative - find new ways to reduce waste quantity and toxicity.

Here are just a few ideas.

- ▶ Turn a giant cardboard box into a child’s playhouse.
- ▶ Transform plastic ice cream tubs into a flower pots. Use egg cartons to plant seedlings.
- ▶ Give pet hamsters or gerbils paper towel and toilet paper cardboard tubes to play in.
- ▶ Select nontoxic inks and art supplies.
- ▶ Turn used tires (not steel-belted) into children’s swings.
- ▶ Combine source reduction techniques. For example, try storing coffee bought in bulk in empty coffee cans.
- ▶ Place an order through the mail with a group of people in order to save money and reduce packaging.

The City of Columbus’ Keep Columbus Beautiful program thanks you for your interest in improving your communities. If you have any questions about the information in this pamphlet, or questions about Keep Columbus Beautiful in general, please call (614) 645-2421.



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# WASTE REDUCTION

*The City of Columbus’ Keep Columbus Beautiful Program provides leadership, guidance, education, assistance and materials to citizens of Columbus to End Littering and improve communities.*

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