



# Chapter 5: Local Action Plan Best Bets Office Waste Reduction and Recycling

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*Cities and municipalities can realize substantial economic savings simply by reducing the amount of office waste they generate. Reduced use, increased efficiency, recycling and the reuse of materials can deliver numerous economic and environmental benefits to cities. There are many forms of waste. This chapter focuses on office wastes, especially paper. Similar analyses can be made for all forms of municipal waste.*

## Office Practices to Reduce Waste<sup>1</sup>

While recycling is an important part of reducing our impact on the environment, it is important to combine recycling with waste prevention programs to implement practices that reduce consumption and to reuse office

supplies. An enormous amount of waste is generated every year in offices due to inefficient use patterns. One of the first places to start is reducing paper use in offices:<sup>2</sup>

**The average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper each year. Producing and delivering that paper requires energy, whose use releases carbon.**

**The U.S. consumes 30% of the world’s paper with 5% of the world’s population.**

**Americans throw away enough office paper every year to build a 12-foot-high wall stretching from New York to San Francisco. When paper rots in a landfill, it releases methane gas, a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.**

<sup>1</sup> For more information visit California Integrated Waste Management Board Waste Prevention and Recycling, [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WPW/Office/](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WPW/Office/), 29 September 2006.

Increasing efficiency increases profits. First place an emphasis on reducing use, then on reducing waste and finally recycling the waste that is still generated. Cities should start with the concepts and practices that staff are most familiar with, and are thus more likely to rapidly embrace. Do what is easiest to get staff started, but recognize that even the easy things require a commitment to making changes in daily habits.

## Reduce

Here are some simple ways to significantly reduce paper waste.

**Set photocopiers and printers to print on both sides by default.** If this is not possible, save paper that can be used on the second side, and reuse it.

**Make computer files instead of paper files whenever possible.** There are many free or inexpensive software programs, such as Stickies<sup>3</sup> or NoteWhen<sup>4</sup> that reduce or eliminate the need for sticky notes and note pads. Small handheld computers are especially good for note taking, calendar scheduling, and other tasks that traditionally use paper. With recent advances in computer software, it is now easier than ever to create documents that are encrypted, password protected, and safe from either unauthorized access or alteration using sophisticated free and low cost software. Electronic signatures are increasingly becoming accepted and are legally binding.

Electronic files also save floor and file space, and most electronic documents are safer than paper. Backup copies can be easily transferred to high-capacity, low-cost removable media, such as compact discs or removable hard drives and stored off-site. Backups can also be transferred over secure Internet connections for off-site storage. Offices are then safer from fire or flood and theft.

**Fight junk mail**—Take steps to reduce the amount of junk mail that offices receive. While this may take a little staff time at first, in the end staff time will be saved by not having to weed out the junk, fewer trees will be lost to produce the paper, less fuel will be used in the production and sale of the paper not to mention the saved printing and delivery costs.

- Remove Your Business From Two Major Mailing List Databases:

1. Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) maintains the largest company database worldwide, collecting information on more than 70 million business establishments from 217 countries. An authorized representative of the business can request the "delisting" process orally or in writing, resulting in its removal from marketing directories, publications and/or mailing lists. To have your business delisted, call D&B's customer service center at 1-800-333-0505 or send an e-mail to [custserv@dnb.com](mailto:custserv@dnb.com).

2. InfoUSA maintains information on more than 12 million businesses in the U.S. To remove your business from their lists, fax a letter to (402) 331-0176 with: "Attention—Business Update Department" on top. The letter should include the complete business name, address, and phone number; the name and title of the person requesting the deletion; and that person's signature. You can also send this letter by regular mail to InfoUSA, P.O. Box 27347, Omaha, NE, 68127.

- Remove Your Business from Specific Company Mailing Lists:  
Not every company uses the mailing list databases maintained by Dun & Bradstreet and InfoUSA. You can either establish a system where one person is designated to contact individual, persistent mail solicitors or encourage all your employees to contact mail solicitors. You can create a preprinted postcard to make it easier for employees to contact solicitors, thus increasing the likelihood that they will. When sending a mailing list deletion request card, be sure to write "Attn: Direct Marketing Dept." under the company address. Even if the company does not have a separate direct marketing department, this will help the card be delivered to an individual within the company who can delete your name from their mailing list.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance, [www.reduce.org/](http://www.reduce.org/), 29 September 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Zhorn Stickies, [www.zhornsoftware.co.uk/stickies/index.html](http://www.zhornsoftware.co.uk/stickies/index.html), 29 September 2006.

<sup>4</sup> PC Magazine Article, [www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1759,1559699,00.asp](http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1759,1559699,00.asp), 29 September 2006.

- If a company continues to send unwanted mail report the persistent offender to the National Waste Prevention Coalition's "Business Junk Mail Complaint Bureau." If the bureau receives several complaints about a particular company, it will notify that company.<sup>5</sup>
- The Federal Trade Commission website on unsolicited mail gives direction on how to remove yourself from unwanted mail.<sup>6</sup> The Direct Marketing Association Mail Preference Service also gives people a way to opt out of junk mail.<sup>7</sup> The Center for a New American Dream provides a free Junk Mail Organizers Kit.<sup>8</sup>

## Reuse

### **Reuse envelopes to send mail whenever possible.**

Use labels to cover the old address on used envelopes. Some companies sell reuse labels<sup>9</sup> for envelopes, which have a discrete message at the bottom explaining that this envelope was reused to save trees.

**Have each staff set aside paper that they use on only one side** so that it can be reused for printing drafts in your printer, or stapled together to make scratch pads. As employees accumulate paper, they can transfer it to a storage box near a printer or photocopier.

## Recycle

### **Start a recycling program**

Determine which material you want to recycle, find someone to pick up the material (for example Yellow Pages directories generally have recycling vendors who will pick up old directories), put recycling bins around your office, and get staff to participate. Having management participate is important to creating a successful recycling program.<sup>10</sup> Look under headings such as recycling, refuse, waste disposal for local programs.

## Reduce Packaging

**Select products from suppliers and manufactures that use minimal packaging.**

**Reuse packing material whenever possible<sup>11</sup>**

**Spread the word. A good example is the best motivator, and you might help persuade local residents and businesses to practice waste prevention. Eliminating excess packaging in one Wal-Mart product line saved the company \$2.4 million a year and 1 million barrels of oil in shipping.**

<sup>5</sup> Contact Tom Watson, Coordinator, National Waste Prevention Coalition. Phone: (206) 296-4481, [tom.watson@metrokc.gov](mailto:tom.watson@metrokc.gov).

<sup>6</sup> Federal Trade Commission, Consumer Alert, [www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt063.htm](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt063.htm), 7 January 2007.

<sup>7</sup> P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale NY 11735-9008.

<sup>8</sup> The Center for a New American Dream, [www.newdream.org/cnad/user/junkmail\\_kit.php?params=bf76072cf86a5bb1396c012786c1028d](http://www.newdream.org/cnad/user/junkmail_kit.php?params=bf76072cf86a5bb1396c012786c1028d), 7 January 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Northern Sun, Save A Tree Labels. [www.northernsun.com/cgi-bin/ns/2032.html](http://www.northernsun.com/cgi-bin/ns/2032.html), 29 September 2006.

<sup>10</sup> For a more thorough explanation of how to begin a recycling program visit: [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BizWaste/OfficePaper/Campaign.htm](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BizWaste/OfficePaper/Campaign.htm), 29 September 2006.

<sup>11</sup> CIWMB, Packaging Waste Reduction. [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Packaging/](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Packaging/), 29 September 2006.

## CASE STUDY: Miami, FL

The management of paper related to hundreds of thousands of traffic cases filed in Miami-Dade County each year is a monumental challenge. The Clerk's Office and the Court have progressed from simple manual procedures to highly complex automated processing systems. Demands for greater efficiency and capacity in managing the never-ending flow of these documents encouraged new and creative ways to manage these court records. The SPIRIT (Simultaneous Paperless Image Retrieval Information Technology) Project,<sup>12</sup> a technology-based information system developed for the Traffic Division of Miami-Dade County, was launched in 1995. Accenture<sup>13</sup> developed the SPIRIT software program for the Miami-Dade County. Projects were initiated to provide improved service to the various agencies that process traffic cases, attorneys and the public.

The SPIRIT Project addresses every aspect of the traffic court process, from scheduling traffic

cases, scanning documents, front counter processing, public viewing, the judge's workbench and end of session processing. All are handled by a specially designed software system that dramatically reduces the amount of paper used in court and cuts down the number of clerks needed. Some of the benefits of SPIRIT include:

**Over a 5-year period, the Clerk's Traffic Division reduced the number of full time positions by 40 and transferred excess employees to the budget office and other vacant position within the Clerk's Office.**

**The Clerk's Traffic division is now handling and processing 32% more citations than in 1995, with a 167% increase in infraction cases scheduled for court, all with 15% less staff.**

**The Traffic Division's use of SPIRIT reduced overtime from a high of \$412,649 for the fiscal year 1996-97 to a projected low of \$150,000 in 2001-02.**

**An improved system for setting schedules has led to a significant reduction in police officer court overtime and increased officers' hours on the street.**

**The error rate of data entry has been reduced from 15% to less than 1%.**

**All traffic clerks have access to SPIRIT case files simultaneously allowing, totally decentralized service to the public at all district locations.**

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<sup>12</sup> Clerk of Courts, 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit of Florida, Miami-Dade County, [www.miami-dadeclerk.com/dadecoc/SPIRIT.asp#SPIRIT\\_System\\_Overview](http://www.miami-dadeclerk.com/dadecoc/SPIRIT.asp#SPIRIT_System_Overview), 29 September 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Accenture website, [www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com), 29 September 2006.

## CASE STUDY: New York, NY

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) WasteLe\$\$ Program<sup>14</sup> is the city's waste prevention and recycling resource for home, agencies and school, and businesses.

The NYC DEP made some simple changes in its office practices that reduced the amount of waste it produced and produced cost savings. The DEP made four changes: double-sided all copies, refurbishing printer toner cartridges, substituting electronic for paper telephone directories, and streamlining letterhead format.

**The reproduction shop at the DEP makes all copies double-sided except when a single-sided copy is specifically requested. The number of double-sided copy jobs has risen to 92%, saving an**

**estimated 5,520,000 sheets of paper every year, or about \$26,000.<sup>15</sup>**

**As part of the NYCitySen\$e Project, the DEP LeFrak City offices initiated a program to collect and return toner printer cartridges to the manufacturers for refurbishing or recycling. In addition, DEP plans to purchase refurbished toner cartridges through its purchasing agents.<sup>16</sup>**

**The DEP implemented a program to update, produce and disseminate its internal telephone directory electronically. Before the program began, DEP printed 2,500 telephone directories annually. Switching to electronic phone directories reduced annual paper use by 1.29 tons and saved around \$14,800.**

**Since the DEP has 14 Deputy Commissioners and 12 regional headquarters, the letterhead needs of the Agency are constantly changing. DEP developed a standardized format for letterhead that includes DEP's logo and the Commissioner's name and provided individual computer templates for each office. The new letterhead system allows DEP staff to personalize and print letterhead on demand and eliminates the need to replace pre-printed letterhead with each new staff appointment.**

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<sup>14</sup> NYCWasteLe\$\$ Program. [www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/at\\_agencies/govt\\_case\\_studies\\_waste.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/at_agencies/govt_case_studies_waste.shtml), 29 September 2006.

<sup>15</sup> To calculate the waste prevention benefits and cost savings of duplex copying visit: [www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/at\\_agencies/measurement\\_tools\\_copying.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/at_agencies/measurement_tools_copying.shtml), 29 September 2006.

<sup>16</sup> To calculate the waste prevention benefits and cost savings associated with establishing a toner-cartridge recycling program visit: [www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/at\\_agencies/measurement\\_tools\\_toner.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/at_agencies/measurement_tools_toner.shtml), 29 September 2006.