

Waste Prevention

What is "Waste Prevention"?

In the hierarchy of "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" Waste Prevention is at the top. Waste Prevention is not recycling, buying products with recycled content, composting, household hazardous waste collection or bottle bill type systems. Waste prevention is reducing the amount of waste generated.

What does a "Wasteshed-wide Program" mean?

A wasteshed-wide program means a program that is present in all parts of the wasteshed. It does not necessarily have to be equally intensive everywhere, but it has to have a presence. At a minimum this program involves a plan that consists of:

- written information, a brochure or a pamphlet, and
- a distribution plan detailing how that information will be made easily accessible.

For the content of the brochure, see "Written Background Information" below.

The distribution of the information can be done in many ways, and may very well be different depending on the area you are trying to reach. E.g. a brochure can be delivered by the hauler, or advertised in the media, informing people where to get the brochure: in the library, City Hall, the mayor's office, the transfer station, etc.

Why is Waste Prevention Important?

In 1996 the state of Oregon recovered 34.9% of the waste stream; in 1995 it was 34.7%. This was a 6.5% increase in tonnage recovered.

The 1991 Legislature set a 50% material recovery goal for the state for the year 2000.

While the amount of waste each Oregonian recycles goes up every year, so does the amount of waste every Oregonian throws away. The following graph shows the per capita recovery, disposal and generation rates in Oregon from 1992 till 1997.

Examples of Waste Prevention

- Reduce the amount of junkmail you receive;
- Plan meals to avoid waste;
- Bring your own shopping bag to the grocery store;
- Buy at the local Farmers' Market;
- Buy, maintain and repair durable products;

- Use rechargeable batteries;
- Borrow, rent or share items such as books, videos, power tools or gardening equipment;
- Use reusable table and silverware instead of paper or plastic;
- Buy only what you need;
- Give gifts that are resource efficient or that are an experience rather than a "thing".

Planning A Waste Prevention Program

Waste Prevention is a difficult concept to communicate. You are not simply providing people with information, you are asking them to look at their values, their wants and needs, something that is difficult or tricky for a government to do.

Asking people to incorporate waste prevention strategies into their lifestyle is also asking for a behavioral change. A carefully planned and targeted public education program will help make this behavioral change happen:

- Who are you talking to? What is your audience? Who do you want to do something as a result of your program?
- What do you want to communicate? Which waste prevention strategy do you want people to adopt? What behavioral changes do you want people to make? What do you want to happen as a result of your waste prevention program?
- How are you going to get your message across?
- Public speaking: a presentation at the meeting of the Elks, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, Senior Citizens group;
- Advertising: in utility bills, on billboards, on reader boards at local retailers, schools; Advertising: in utility bills, on billboards, on reader boards at local retailers,
- Print media: the local newspaper, monthly newsletter of the Chamber of Commerce, School District, Downtown Merchants;
- Broadcast Media: local radio and TV stations. Contact them regularly with information they can use to inform their listeners and viewers, establish a relationship;
- Have a booth at the County Fair, the opening of the new library, park, downtown renovation;



State of Oregon
Department of
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**Waste Prevention
And Management**
811 SW 6th Avenue
Portland, OR 97204
Phone: (503) 229-5913
(800) 452-4011
Fax: (503) 229-6954
www.deq.state.or.us

- Create and build an interactive Waste Prevention game you can take to schools or to your booth.
- Don't reinvent the wheel. See what other communities and states are doing. Check out some of the resources listed below.

Written background documentation

"Spotlight on Waste Prevention" (530-K-95-002) gives practical suggestions for businesses, consumers, and community organizations. Available at no charge from the EPA at (800) 424-9346.

"Buy Smart. Waste Less. Save More." A Waste Prevention Shopping Guide. Single copies of brochure available at no charge from the Environmental Defense Fund at (800) 684-3322.

"Making Less Garbage, A Planning Guide for Communities" and "Rethinking Resources, New Ideas for Community Waste Prevention" by INFORM, a national non-profit organization that identifies practical ways of living and doing business that are environmentally sustainable at: <http://www.informinc.org>.

Center for the New American Dream, Helping People Consume Responsibly for Our Families and the Planet. Phone: 301-891-3683, website: <http://www.newdream.org>.

EPA's "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Waste" website:

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/rrr.htm>.

"The ULS Report" (ULS = Use Less Stuff) by Partners for Environmental Progress, website: <http://www.cygnus-group.com>.

"Making Source Reduction and Reuse Work in Your Community. A Manual for Local Governments" by the National Recycling Coalition, Inc., 1998. Phone: (703) 683-9025, Fax: (703) 683-9026.

California Integrated Waste Management Board, Waste Prevention World. Lots of information at <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/wpw/default.htm>

Douglas County website, small, simple and clear, a great example:

<http://www.co.douglas.or.us/recycle/>

"Beyond the Bin. Saving Resources, Saving Money," a brochure by DEQ. Within Oregon (800) 452-4011 or at

<http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/beyond.html> .

"Reducing Junk Mail" fact sheet, published by Privacy Rights Clearinghouse. Website: <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs4-junk.htm>

Referrals to existing programs

Metro Recycling Information, (503) 234-3000, or <http://www.metro.dst.or.us>

Alex Cuyler, City of Eugene, (541) 682-6830, or alex.d.cuyler@ci.eugene.or.us

Terri Peterson, Douglas County, (541) 440-4350, or txpeters@co.douglas.or.us

Recycling Team of Central Oregon, (541) 388-3638, or recycle@bendnet.com

Ted Ward, Del Norte County Solid Waste Management, 391 Front Street, Crescent City, CA 95531.

Excellent "Zero Waste" program in a rural area, just south of the Oregon border.



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