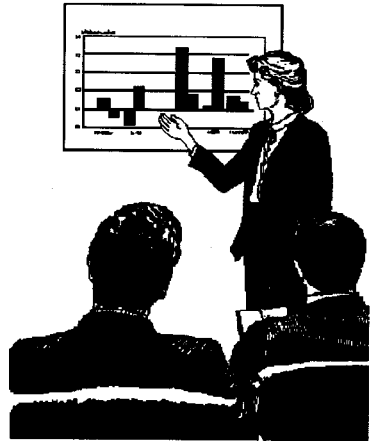




Don't Let Your Next Conference Go To Waste:

Go for the "GREEN"



Planning Environmentally Sound Conferences

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**Recycled/Recyclable • Printed with Vegetable Oil Based Inks on 100% Recycled Paper
(50% Postconsumer)**

DON'T LET YOUR NEXT CONFERENCE GO TO WASTE:

Go For The "*GREEN*"

Introduction

Conferences are universal. Anywhere there are people, there are conferences, meetings, workshops and seminars. There are conferences for teachers, medical and dental professionals, engineers, chemists, counselors, accountants, managers, farmers, ranchers, bee keepers, zoo keepers, public speakers, preachers, military staff, government workers, business personnel, politicians, buyers and sellers and even people who plan conferences. Everyone goes to conferences.

We go to conferences to learn what others are doing in our field of interest and to tell what we are doing. We listen to speeches, walk through exhibits and talk with people.

We stay in hotels or conference centers. We meet people for breakfast, lunch and dinner, or meals may be a part of the conference. At breaks we talk while drinking coffee, tea, sodas or juices and eating donuts, muffins, pastries, fruit, sandwiches, chips, pretzels and on and on.

We wear name tags which help us meet new people and to remember names of people we have met before. We are provided with folders or notebooks, writing pads, pens and pencils. We learned about the conference and received registration forms in the mail.

Conferences can be informative, inspiring and even fun, but they can also generate a great quantity of waste products. Unless we plan wisely, we can end up with materials that cannot be reused or recycled, in another word - **garbage**.

Goals

The primary goal in presenting "green" conferences is to reduce waste. This conserves natural resources and protects the environment. Waste reduction goes all the way back to proper design of products and packaging and includes reduction in volume and toxicity in the manufacture of products. Product design includes factors for extending the life of products and provision for reuse.

Other goals are to recycle materials, set an example for other conference organizers, reduce costs and save landfill space. All of the goals for "green" conferences are interrelated. For example, the goal of reducing landfill volume is a function of reducing waste and recycling materials and it also results in cost savings. In 1990, 195 million tons of household waste were produced in the United States, according to data developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Of that amount, 67 percent was sent to landfills, 16 percent was incinerated and 17 percent was recycled.

Recycling and reusing materials can save money as well as help the environment. Also, every group which holds "green" conferences sets an example for others. Soon, sound environmental management of conferences will be the norm.

Hotels/Conference Centers

Facilities should be selected where the management is responsive to the "green" conference approach on waste reduction. The facility should have a designated coordinator responsible for the conference, including responsibility for waste prevention and recycling.

All of the specific items presented below should be discussed with the management during negotiation and planning. The hotel/conference center should either provide the recycling bins and collection service or arrange for recyclers to provide them.

Arrangements for voluntary reuse of linens, towels, soap, etc., for multi-night stays in lodging rooms should be made. Also, newspapers, cans, etc., from lodging rooms should be recycled.

Printed Material

By far the greatest opportunity for protecting the environment in holding conferences will be in managing the use of paper, both in the amount and type, in particular, printed materials. Of course, the use of recycled paper comes to mind first and foremost. Paper with the maximum percentage of post-consumer paper content possible should be used for all purposes, and the same is true for recycled poster board.

The use of colored and glossy paper should be minimized if the recycling program does not accept it. Colored ink can be used effectively to call attention to information without using colored paper. Unbleached paper and paper whitened with other than chlorine or chlorinated compounds are not always readily available but should be sought, since some chlorinated by-product compounds can be detrimental to the environment.

Recyclability may be an issue on unbleached paper and should be checked with the recycler.

The number of handouts should be minimized. Papers and brochures can be shown by speakers during presentations and copies made available rather than handing them out to all participants. If writing pads are furnished, the number of sheets should be limited to actual needs, perhaps 15 sheets for a three-day conference.

Envelopes can be avoided by designing brochures and correspondence for direct mailing. All materials should be printed on both sides of the paper. Mailing labels backed with water-based adhesives, if available, should be used to make them fully recyclable.

Printing ink should be free of metals, such as lead and cadmium. Soy-based inks are more easily recycled than oil-based inks and should be considered. Reconditioned toner cartridges for laser printers and facsimile transmission machines should be used.

Paper can be saved by maximizing electronic communication. E-Mail can include bulletin boards and direct communications.

FAX machines give you back your original after transmission for use on the next FAX or for filing.

Posters and signs used at conferences should preferably be erasable vinyl coated boards. Disposable poster boards should be saved for reuse after the conference or donated to a school.

A substitute for the typical conference notebook is the use of file folders. These folders come in single and accordion-fold styles and can be recycled. Recycled-content folders and notebooks are available.

Name Tags

Throw-away name tags are no longer acceptable in today's recycle-minded society. Reusable clear plastic holders can be used and collected at the end of the conference. Erasable name cards that can be reused have been tried on a limited basis but are not generally in use. Plastic holders that can be reused for luggage identification have been tried. Some problems are that regular conference participants soon run out of luggage needing tags and the holders are not water tight.

One collection technique would be to take up the name tags at the final session for use in awarding door prizes. Another procedure would be to provide a well-marked, closed box with a slot in the top for collection as everyone leaves. Open boxes are not recommended, because people tend to throw trash in them without reading the label. Boxes should be placed in highly visible, convenient locations.

Name-tag holders with "alligator" clips generally work well for those with pockets and lapels, but pins can be added to accommodate those without them. Elastic loops around the neck generally serve well, but sanitation concerns in reuse must be considered.

Recycling Program

The best option for a recycling program is to utilize the system already developed by the hotel or conference center. Conference organizers would then only have to work with the staff to ensure that containers are properly placed, the right materials are collected, etc. Otherwise, a program will have to be worked out with the hotel/conference center.

Recycling containers should be designed and arranged for the convenience of conference participants and organizers. Staff should not have to sort through the recyclables because of the time involved, sanitation and safety. Therefore, multiple bins should be used to cover the major types of materials. The bins should be grouped together as a unit with trash containers and placed in heavily travelled paths, including break and exhibit areas. Placing the trash container(s) next to the recycling containers will minimize the amount of trash ending up in the recycling bins.

Recycling and trash containers should be well marked as seen from all directions, and signs should be placed above them. The bin openings should be placed at waist height to make them as easy to use as possible. Containers with lids will minimize contamination of the materials. The number and size of containers depend upon the number of people at the event, the frequency of pick-up and the choices of bins available from recyclers. The bin area should be kept as clean as possible, and bins should never be allowed to overflow. Conference staff should be prepared to empty them, if necessary, between regular pick-ups.

A unique container that catches a lot of attention for the recycling cause is a Worm Bin which is really a small ecosystem. This is a large container containing worms and soil. It is usually located in break/lunch areas where food scraps can be dropped in. You get on-the-spot composting with results being seen during the conference.

Breaks and Meals

The stacks of polystyrene foam and paper cups and individual sugar packets seen regularly at conferences in the past are slowly becoming history, being replaced by reusable implements.

Cups, saucers, plates, glasses, spoons, forks, etc., should all be reusable. Cloth napkins may seem like a luxury but they save paper and are reusable. Glass sugar containers with pouring spouts should replace individual paper packets, and pitchers should be used for cream/milk. Reusable spoons are the preferred implements for stirring.

Juices should preferably be mixed from concentrates and served from pitchers into glasses. The second choice is to serve them from single or multi-serving recyclable or reusable containers.

Soft drinks would ideally be served from soda fountains into glasses, but they are not generally available. Large plastic bottles or aluminum cans are acceptable for pouring into glasses and can be recycled. Some participants may want to bring their own cups.

At meals, reusable table cloths should be used. Individual servings of butter/margarine in paper leave trash, so shared containers could be used. It may be necessary to post staff or volunteers at recycling containers after meals to "direct traffic" to the correct bins.

Box lunches in recyclable cardboard should present no problem as long as boxes are collected for recycling. Reusable plastic lunch containers for participants to take home have been used successfully. Food scraps should be composted when feasible. Thin paper plates and paper napkins may be composted with food.

In some situations, unserved food could be donated to shelters. Recently, a conference organizer asked the banquet manager for the leftover sack lunches to take to a local mission. The manager gave a long speech on how the hotel could be liable if people got sick, and then she said quietly, "That was the statement I am required to make. Now take them and do whatever you want with them." So the sack lunches were taken to the mission, and about

75 people enjoyed them for supper. There are organizations in some areas that collect and distribute leftover food.

Exhibitors

Exhibitors should be encouraged to follow all of the guidelines all other "players" in the conference will be following. Individual trash containers should not be placed at each exhibit. Exhibitors and their visitors would then be "forced" to use recycling bins that are centrally located. If this is not feasible for some reason, two containers should be provided at each exhibit - one for trash and one for recyclable items.

Conference organizers should discuss the type of curtains, table covering, etc., that will be used. Cloth is preferable, but other suitable materials are being developed, some with recycled content. Exhibitors should be encouraged to utilize recycled materials in handouts, posters and displays and to print brochures on both sides. Containers used only by exhibitors should be kept out of sight to prevent others from using them. When the recycle container at the exhibit becomes full, the exhibitor should take it to the central recycling site.

Voluntary cooperation should be sought, or exhibitors may be required to sign waste reduction agreements.

Motivation

As conference organizers, our dedication and enthusiasm for protecting the environment through "green" conferences will spill over to the participants. This snowball effect should be initiated right at the beginning of the conference during the opening remarks. Ways the audience can participate to make the conference environmentally sound should be discussed.

The opening remarks should also motivate the participants by explaining why each procedure is important and the benefits of following that procedure. Some may take a little extra effort, but we can lay down a challenge to go the extra mile. Stress that they will be setting an example for others at the conference and for

future conference participants. Depending upon the audience, you may want to suggest that businesses should develop a "green" image.

To strengthen the motivation, you may want to quote figures, such as how many acres of landfill space or the numbers of trees that can be saved or other data relevant to your audience. Specific solid waste and recycling data on the conference city or area would be of special interest.

You can keep the motivation going by using reminders throughout the conference. Progress reports on the number of recyclables collected may keep the interest up.

Checklist

To assist you in planning your "green" conference, a checklist is provided. In the interest of protecting our environment and providing for future generations, we encourage you to use the checklist to make your conferences a bright "green."



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"Green" Conference Checklist
Don't Let Your Next Conference Go to Waste: Go For The "Green"

conference: _____ Date(s): _____
location: _____
facility: _____ Contact: _____
telephone: _____ FAX: _____

Hotel/Conference Center

- Responsive to "green" conference approach
- Recycle program in place
- meeting rooms/conference area and lodging rooms
 - cans glass
 - paper newspapers
 - plastic bottles cardboard
 - trash
- Recycle pick-up frequency satisfactory
- Voluntary reuse of linens, etc., available and publicized

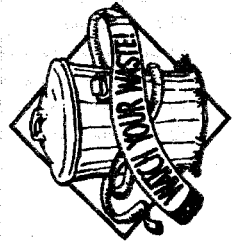
Printed Material

- Recycled paper/poster board with post-consumer content
- "Envelop-less" mailings
- Mailing labels backed with water-based adhesive, as available
- Paper unbleached or bleached with other than chlorine compounds
- Paper easily recycled (minimize glossy or colored paper)
- Two-sided printing and copying
- Printing ink free of metals and not oil-based
- Conference folders recyclable and with recycled content

Name Tags

- Reusable holders
- Collection box prepared (labeled and with slotted top)

"Green" Conference Checklist



Recycling Program

Multiple bins available

Source: Facility Recycler Yourself

Number: _____ Paper
 _____ Aluminum
 _____ Plastic
 _____ Other

Well-traveled areas

Locations: _____

Collection schedule set

Schedule: _____

Backup for collection in case of overflow

Separate trash containers included with each group of bins

Signs to go over and on the recycling bins and trash containers

Breaks and Meals

Reusable cups, glasses, dishes and utensils

Cloth napkins, table cloths

Use of single-serving condiments eliminated or minimized (sugar, cream, butter)

Pitchers for juice

Stirrers reusable (usually metal spoons)

Beverage containers recyclable (aluminum, plastic)

Food scraps composted, if possible

Unserved food donated to shelters

Exhibitors

Encouraged to follow applicable items on this checklist

Recycling bins and trash cans arranged

No materials to be left behind

Motivation

Opening remarks/announcements planned

Facts on benefits to environment (including local)

Cost savings

Good business

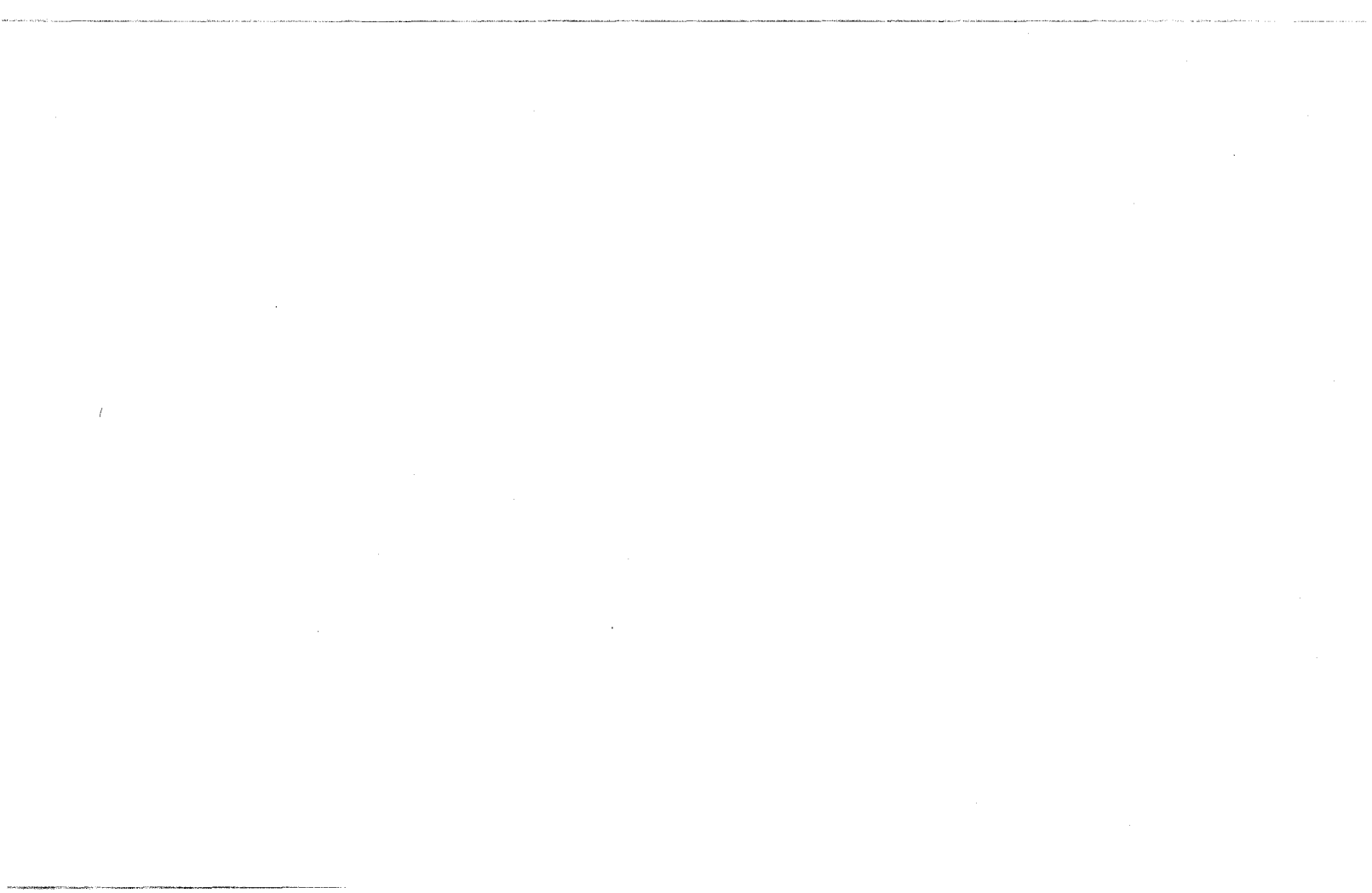
Description of arrangements for recycle/reuse

Reminders planned

Announcements

Included in printed program

Signs prepared





United States
Environmental Protection Agency
Region 4
Office of Solid Waste
345 Courtland Street, NE
Atlanta, GA 30365

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use
\$300