

Restaurants

[Environmentally Preferable Purchasing for Restaurants](#)

[The Green Restaurant Association](#) (GRA), a national non-profit organization, provides services in research, consulting, education, marketing and community organizing. The GRA utilizes a collaborative strategy that involves restaurants, manufacturers, vendors, grassroots organizations, government, media, and restaurant customers. The GRA's model provides a convenient way for all sectors of the restaurant industry, which represents 10% of the U.S. economy, to become more environmentally sustainable.

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Small Business Assistance Waste Reduction in the Restaurant Industry

Benefits/Background: The following is a list of some important requirements as well as helpful suggestions for best managing your business to help reduce costs, reduce waste, keep hazardous substances out of the environment and protect your health. Although all may not be applicable to your specific business, please read through and check how your business is doing.

The benefits of waste reduction:

In the restaurant industry waste is generated in these forms: solid waste, food waste, and water and energy waste. There are many opportunities for waste reduction and pollution prevention in the restaurant industry. These improvements will lead to a reduction in operating costs and improved efficiency. Customers may also appreciate a business's effort to improve environmental quality.

Reducing food waste:

The National Restaurant Association estimates that 20% of all food prepared commercially in the United States goes to waste. This means the time and money associated with food purchase and preparation are also wasted, and restaurants must pay for food waste disposal.

Consider the following options for food waste management:

- Prepare food as it is ordered to minimize unnecessary prepping.
- Rotate perishable stocks at every delivery to reduce the likelihood of spoilage.
- Ensure grease traps are properly maintained; clean fryers and filter the oil daily to extend fryer and oil life.
- Contract with a rendering service for recycling used cooking oil, meat, and trap grease.
- Avoid sending food waste down the garbage disposal as this waste is only transferred from the landfill to the wastewater treatment plant.
- Donate excess food to a local food bank or food rescue program.
- Look for animal farms that will accept non-edible food waste.

Opportunities for Solid Waste Reduction:

- Use refillable condiment dispensers instead of single serving packages.
- If meals are consistently being returned unfinished consider reducing portion sizes.

-Serve beverages from a beverage gun or dispenser, purchase bar mixes from concentrate, and purchase milk in five gallon dispenser boxes.

Reducing Water and Energy Consumption

- Install automatic turn off faucets and low flow toilets in restrooms.
- Use energy saving compact fluorescent light bulbs instead of the more energy consuming high wattage light bulbs.
- Use energy efficient appliances, such as dishwashers, refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners.
- Clean refrigerator coils and change air conditioning filters regularly to help these appliances run more efficiently.
- Install motion sensors or light timers in restrooms, pantries, and freezer units.
- Set thermostats at a reasonable level.

Restaurant Purchasing:

- Choose cleaning products with the least amount of toxins, and try to purchase products in concentrated form.
- Choose products with minimal packaging.
- Whenever possible, purchase products such as paper towels, toilet tissue, menus, order pads, cash register tapes, plastic bags, dish trays, rubber mats, brooms, and benches made from recycled materials.

Pollution Prevention

Sources for pollution prevention information and environmentally preferable purchasing options specific for auto repair/servicing, in addition to other businesses can be found at <http://www.p2gems.org>.

Our Small Business Assistance Program at DEP offers *free* on-site assistance services under our protective Small Business Compliance Incentives Policy. This policy provides protection from regulatory enforcement in addition to clear time frames for correcting possible violations. On-site business visits are typically helpful, low stress and designed to give clear and helpful information related directly to the individual small business at their location. A summary letter from the assistance staff provides your status and recommendations for your business in an easy to understand format. The program staff is also a contact for pollution prevention and compliance information, if you prefer other than on-site assistance. Call us toll-free at 1-800-789-9802 to find out more.

Other free assistance can be provided by our Maine Dept. of Labor, Safetyworks! program to help with air sampling, noise monitoring, ergonomic assessment, as well as general safety and health consultation. Contact David Wacker, Director of Workplace Health and Safety (phone number: 624-6400), for information regarding a free audit to assist your small business to be in compliance with worker safety issues.

This guide sheet is provided by the Small Business Assistance Program at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection for assistance with pollution prevention and regulatory compliance issues. Drafted in December, 2002.

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SOLID WASTE

Procure recycled and recyclable products.

- o Work with suppliers to reduce packaging, thereby reducing disposal costs.

o Most beer and soft drinks can be served on tap, reducing both the costs of buying beverages and disposing of recyclable cans and bottles.

o Switch from disposable items such as napkins, utensils, placemats, cups, trays, and single-serving condiment packages to reusable items to reduce solid waste disposal costs. If you must use disposable items, try using bio-degradable products.

<http://www.biocorpna.com/>

<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/FoodWaste/Compost/Biodegrade.htm>

<http://www.simplybiodegradable.com/>

o Separate newspaper, office paper, tin and bimetal cans, glass, plastics (high density polyethylene-HDPE, polyethylene terephthalate-PET), corrugated cardboard, wooden pallets, aluminum, kitchen grease, food waste, and other recyclables from solid waste and implement a recycling program. Use color-coded collection bins in the kitchen and bar for easy identification.

o Check with your waste hauler and ask what types of recycling services are available. Look for haulers who are flexible and willing to work with you to design a recycling program based on your needs. Ask your waste hauler for advice about keeping recyclables and wet waste separate. If the establishment is self-serve, post signs letting customers know that you are recycling and what they should do with their bottles and cans. Either put out a bin for these items or have customers leave them on a designated counter for collection by your staff.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

o Institute a hazardous waste collection program. Many commercial cleaning products contain hazardous materials such as caustics or strong acids. Never pour hazardous wastes down the drain. Never mix different wastes. If possible, consider using alternative materials. Look for "non-toxic," "non-petroleum based," "free of ammonia, phosphates, dye, or perfume," or "readily biodegradable" on the label. Avoid chlorinated compounds, petroleum distillates, phenols, and formaldehyde. Phosphate is an aquatic plant nutrient that can cause excessive growth of aquatic algae and water quality problems after the detergent is washed down the drain. Ask your supplier about the many phosphatefree, biodegradable detergents on the market.

<http://www.simplybiodegradable.com/>

<http://www.westp2net.org/Janitorial/jp4.htm>

<http://www.greenseal.org/>

http://www.doi.gov/oepr/reports/cgr_clean.pdf

o Practice good housekeeping to reduce pest populations and the need for chemical controls. Keep doors shut when not in use; place weather stripping on doors; caulk and seal openings in walls; install or repair

FOOD WASTE

Composting your food waste is an alternative to disposing of it as solid waste.

<http://www.bra.org/composting.html>

<http://www.composters.com/main.shtml>

Roughly 10% of all solid waste is organic and could be composted. If you are unable to compost your food waste consider contacting the following organizations:

Foodchain

900/659-7000

A network of prepared and perishable food rescue programs throughout the United States and Canada. Foodchain provides listings of local organizations that accept donations and distribute them to those in need.

Second Harvest

800/532-FOOD

Operates a national network of local food banks, working mainly with the food industry to distribute surplus food inventories. Second Harvest provides a nationwide listing of food programs.

ENERGY SAVING RESOURCES

The following list of links will display different products that will allow your business to save money through reducing the demand of electricity.

Energy Star's quick guide for restaurants

www.epa.gov/smallbiz/archive/restaurants.html

This includes much of the following information plus links to many sites that can help you survey your current energy use and find appropriate solutions and replacement products.

<http://www.lightpanel.com/>

<http://www.specialty-lights.com/tritium-questions.html>

<http://www.isolite.com/aboutluminous.htm>

Energy Star is a program that can assist you in auditing your energy efficiency while providing specific technical resources to lower energy usage.

www.energystar.gov

WATER SAVING RESOURCES

The following list of links will display different products that will allow your business to save money through reducing the demand of water.

<http://www.falconwaterfree.com>

<http://www.waterless.com/>

<http://www.now2000.co.uk/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/earth/stories/s723534.htm>