

Hotel/Motel Waste Reduction

PLANNING FOR AN ECOLOGICAL PROPERTY

This waste reduction fact sheet is one in a series produced by the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA) to assist the lodging industry and concerned professionals in efforts to reduce waste and enjoy the benefits of cost savings and a public image as environmentally responsible organizations.

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Environmental issues such as wastewater and garbage are not glamorous. If a facility is to approach environmental issues efficiently, however, it must set up a plan to deal with them. Many good reasons exist for planning to preserve the environment:

- **To save money.** Some facilities have cut operational costs by thousands of dollars through waste prevention, recycling, reuse and water and energy conservation.
- **To get good publicity.** This results in increased business and savings on advertising budgets.
- **To be a good steward.** That is, to preserve valuable community resources. Environmental efforts will help promote clean air, clean water and less dependence on landfills.

Although many proven strategies are available to help lodging owners and managers improve the bottom line and be good stewards of the environment, they often must show initiative and persistence to put these practices into place. This fact sheet outlines key elements of successful environmental programs.

SUCCESS STRATEGIES

① IDENTIFY AN ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION

Frequently, the enthusiasm and motivation of one person can make an environmental program succeed. It is not necessary that the facility's "environmental champion" be a waste reduction specialist: many of these champions have come from areas as varied as personnel, food and beverage, administrative offices and engineering. The critical factors are that this individual is committed to environmental improvement, has the support of the general manager, and can work with employees at all levels and sectors of the facility.

② OBTAIN MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

The most important ingredient for successful environmental initiatives is owner/manager commitment to a plan to eliminate and reduce waste. Employees will be aware of the degree of commitment by management and will rise or fall to the level that is expected. When management sees, for example, that the facility can save \$50 per lamp per year by switching from incandescent to fluorescent lamps (see Ecological Fact Sheet on Guest Rooms/Housekeeping), its commitment generally is assured.

③ CREATE AN ENVIRONMENTAL TEAM

A successful environmental program needs information from all areas of the facility including housekeeping, restaurants, maintenance and management. An environmental team can act as a planning committee to (1) identify and evaluate opportunities to improve a facility's environmental performance, (2) set a schedule to implement the strategies, and (3) monitor the program in terms of its goals.

④ CONDUCT AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The environmental team can identify and evaluate opportunities to improve a property's environmental performance by conducting a simple walk-through of all parts of the facility, including guest rooms, kitchen, laundry facilities, restaurant, lobby, grounds, hallways and meeting rooms. This assessment should include an examination of water



and electricity use as well as solid waste generation. A review of purchases, bills and hauling records complements the data gathered during a walk-through.

5 ESTABLISH GOALS

Once there is an understanding of the property's present environmental performance, the environmental team can set goals for improvement. Goals should include short- and long-term benchmarks, as in these examples:

- Reduce electricity use by 20 percent during the next year.
- Reuse or recycle all corrugated cardboard used by the facility.
- Implement a sheet and towel reuse program within six months.
- Donate excess banquet food to a local food reuse program during the winter holiday season.

6 TRAIN AND MOTIVATE STAFF

Staff training is a crucial part of a property's environmental performance. Both new and veteran employees need specific and ongoing training on waste reduction techniques and practices—for example, on collecting and storing recyclables. This educational effort also can highlight the improvements that will protect the environment and save money for the facility.

Mission Statement

Some facilities reflect their environmental commitment in their company's mission or policy statement. Here is the mission statement of the five-star Mandarin Hotel Group in San Francisco:

The Mandarin Hotel Group is committed to actively participate in the continuous improvement and protection of the environment for our guests, our colleagues and the community.

To keep staff motivated, some facilities solicit employee ideas or present staff involved in recycling with letters of appreciation from the general manager. Another strategy is to give the winner of a monthly drawing the proceeds from the sale of aluminum cans collected during that time period. Of course, a free dinner at the facility's restaurant also is a good way to reward excellent work and keep employees motivated.

7 EVALUATE AND MONITOR THE PROGRAM

An ecological hotel should strive for continual improvement. Methods to assess the successes and shortcomings of the environmental program should be established. The program should be inspected periodically, and utility or other bills should be evaluated to track changes that result from environmental efforts.

CASE STUDY

Washington Duke Inn and Golf Club, Durham, North Carolina

Involving and Training Employees in the Key

The Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club, with 171 rooms, a restaurant and conference and banquet facilities, operates a successful waste reduction and recycling program. Waste reduction efforts include an extensive recycling program for office paper, telephone books, plastic bottles, gable top milk cartons, aluminum and steel cans, grease, corrugated cardboard, glass bottles and newspapers. Excess prepared food is donated to shelters and nonprofit agencies. Linens, furniture, and draperies also are donated to area shelters.

Deana Merrell, director of human resources at the Washington Duke Inn and environmental champion for the facility, attributes the success of the program to the recycling committee. This committee meets the second Tuesday of each month to discuss recycling issues. Representatives from each department—including the manager's office—attend. According to Merrell, "These meetings not only provide opportunities to improve the technical aspects of the program, they also create a sense of teamwork and ownership of the recycling program. And they keep the program fresh and the level of enthusiasm high."

Employee education is a critical component of a successful environmental program. "These waste reduction efforts are only possible by ensuring that all two hundred employees are involved and properly trained," says Merrell. Job descriptions of all employees contain a section on recycling, and recycling training is part of employee orientation. Recycling is also on the agenda for monthly staff meetings. Good work is rewarded through "star memos" (complimentary memos from upper management) and Recycler-of-the-Month awards.



The N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA) provides free, non-regulatory technical assistance and training on methods to eliminate, reduce or recycle wastes before they become pollutants or require disposal. Telephone DPPEA at (919) 715-6500 or (800) 763-0136 or e-mail at nowaste@p2pays.org for further information about the issues discussed in this fact sheet or to discuss any of your waste reduction concerns.

DPPEA-FY01-05. 500 copies of this public document were printed on recycled paper at a cost of \$54.00, or \$0.108 per copy.