

# TENNESSEE SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

## Recycling & Waste Reduction

Proper waste disposal and management is a necessity in the hospitality industry to meet the demands and needs of guests, but to also comply with health and safety standards, as well as state and local regulations. Luckily, it is possible to integrate waste reduction practices into your facility, while still meeting these standards. Selecting less-waste products, developing efficient routines, and providing appropriate options for disposal for both staff and guests are excellent ways to cut your facility's waste volumes.

Recycling and waste reduction initiatives can include offering more comprehensive recycling to guests, reducing packaging on purchased and prepared items, finding alternative disposal methods for unusual waste streams, and renegotiating your waste contract. Using the best practices identified below can assist staff and managers in achieving waste reduction procedures that meet guest needs and benefit the plant and the bottom line.

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS

**Financial Savings.** Waste reduction methods usually reveal financial savings. Fewer purchases made due to source reduction efforts, avoided disposal fees and reduced service fees through renegotiated contracts, and potential revenue from large volume recyclables such as cardboard and metals are all ways that can lead to financial savings.

**Promotes wise and efficient use of resources.** By being conscious of items that enter your establishment as a product and leave as waste, you are fostering value and appreciation for the earth's resources. Taking waste reduction initiatives means not only reducing the volume of waste sent to landfills, but also preventing our resources from being wasted.

**Reduce environmental impacts.** Reducing the waste generated at your hotel means reducing the waste being sent to landfills, which reduces the amount of greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere. Implementing source reduction methods can lead to a reduction of energy consumed through production processes as well.

**Foster community, county, and state partnerships.** It is impossible to go on a waste reduction journey solo. Therefore, partnerships will need to be made with local businesses, organizations, and non-profits to help you reach your waste reduction goals.

### THIS GUIDE IS APPLICABLE...

#### FOR

- ✓ Food & Beverage
- ✓ Travel & Tourism
- ✓ Lodging
- ✓ Recreation

#### TO

- ✓ Management
- ✓ Event Planning
- ✓ Food Operations
- ✓ Housekeeping
- ✓ Maintenance & Operations
- ✓ Front of the House

## BEST PRACTICES

1

**Conduct a Waste Audit.** You can't manage what you don't measure. It is important to establish a baseline of how much waste your business is generating, how much comes from guests, and how much could be recycled or avoided altogether.

2

**Implement source reduction practices.** Reducing waste at the source is an excellent way to make an impact in your waste stream before even looking at recycling options. Source reduction practices involve reviewing old methods and implementing new ones that are more efficient and require less resources. An example would be to switch to paperless receipts and email confirmations to avoid or reduce paper purchases.

3

**Make recycling easy for guests.** Guests shouldn't have to go out of their way to look for a recycling receptacle or walk to a separate room or hallway to properly dispose of an item. Recycling receptacles should be located everywhere a trash bin is located, usually within 2 feet of each other for ultimate convenience. Receptacles should be clearly labeled with items that are acceptable and unacceptable to reduce confusion.

4

**Offer recycling for all waste streams generated by hotel.** Sometimes a hotel will offer items for sale – such as grab-and-go food – that is packaged in materials that can't be recycled, or that aren't accepted by the hotel's recycling service. It is important to think through these waste streams generated by and sold in the hotel and ensure there are proper recycling options available for each. External organizations, such as TerraCycle and Clean the World, might offer a solution for the product. If recycling a specific packaging material is not feasible, consider using alternative packaging.

5

**Conduct a staff training.** It is vital for all hotel staff and employees to be on the same page when trying to divert waste, since they are ultimately the ones who manage it. Each individual needs to properly understand local recycling procedures and be familiar with the materials used in the hotel and where they go. Each recycling facility is different and has different procedures. It is important to follow your local provider's recycling regulations, whether single stream, sorted, or a mixture.

6

**Find alternative disposal methods for difficult items.** Sometimes locating ways to divert unusual waste streams is difficult and time consuming, but once that partnership or service has been established it is a permanent way to reduce your waste stream a little bit at a time. Forming partnerships with local charities to donate used or leftover toiletries, recycling used lightbulbs and electronics, and locating a textile recycler for discarded sheets and laundered items are all excellent ways to reduce your hotel's footprint and avoid waste disposal fees.

7

**Review your waste contract.** Generally, after implementing waste reduction policies and practices, your waste contract will likely exceed your new waste volume needs. Evaluate the volumes of waste generated after waste reduction practices have been implemented for several months, and renegotiate your service contract for a smaller dumpster, fewer pickups, and recycling services included.

## RESOURCES

### Tennessee State Parks

- [Go Green Guidelines](#)

### Environmental Protection Agency

- [Managing and Reducing Wastes: A Guide for Commercial Buildings](#)