

# (37) EASY THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR OFFICE GREENER

There are many simple, cost-effective things you can do right now to reduce your workplace's impact on the planet. Making your office environmentally friendly doesn't have to mean a lot of time and money. And it will provide a healthier and more productive space.

## PAPER AND WASTE REDUCTION

- 1 Make two-sided printing and copying standard practice in your office. (Set your printer properties or copier to duplex printing.)
- 2 Use the back sides of printed sheets and outdated letterhead for notes and drafts; use in the fax and/or the printer.
- 3 Send office memos and message via voice or e-mail, or post one copy at a central bulletin board.
- 4 Select products with the least packaging and/or with easily recyclable packaging.
- 5 Purchase reusable rather than disposable office items, such as refillable pens, erasable white boards and wall calendars.
- 6 Eliminate disposables by using permanent wares in lunch and break rooms and using refillable containers of sugar, salt and pepper to avoid individual condiment packets.
- 7 Implement a large-scale recycling program – paper (all kinds), glass, plastic, cans/containers, carpeting, pallets, compost, electronics and more.
- 8 Reuse everything you can – like packaging (e.g. bubble wrap, cardboard boxes, Styrofoam blocks) or find someone who can. Contact the Plastic Loose Fill Council at 1.800.828.2214.
- 9 Use cloth towels or an air hand dryer in bathrooms.
- 10 Donate or exchange unwanted but usable items to schools, churches, hospitals, libraries, museums, nonprofit organizations and teacher resource organizations.
- 11 Enroll in a waste exchange program where your unwanted items can become another company's resource.
- 12 Purchase products made from recycled materials. Office paper, folders, envelopes, pencils, pens, tissues, boxes, bags, furniture, carpet and recycling containers are just a few products that can be sourced from entirely recycled materials.



## 95% of our energy comes from nonrenewable resources.

Commercial buildings use nearly 40% of these energy resources regularly, almost as much as residences, even though residences outnumber commercial buildings 23 to 1! And, as infrastructure development steadily increases, so does the demand for water and energy. The efficient use of water and electricity is vital to saving money and sustaining a healthy environment.

### SAVING ENERGY AND WATER

- 14 Use equipment with energy saving features (e.g. look for computers, copiers, printers with the Energy Star® logo).
- 15 Use equipment settings that save energy by automatically turning off idle monitors and printers. (For information and software go to [www.energystar.gov/powermanagement](http://www.energystar.gov/powermanagement))
- 16 Install lighting controls, such as occupancy sensors, photocells or time clocks.
- 17 Replace incandescent bulbs and fixtures with compact fluorescents or low voltage track lighting.
- 18 Reduce fixtures and put in higher efficiency lighting such as high-pressure sodium or metal halides fixtures, or reduce the number of lamps and increase lighting efficiency by installing optical reflectors or diffusers.
- 19 Replace magnetic ballasts with electronic ballasts. Install T-8 or T-5 lamps.
- 20 Replace normal exit signs with LED, compact fluorescent or electroluminescent exit signs.
- 21 Set thermostat at 76°F for cooling, 68°F for heating; set back thermostat after hours.
- 22 Set refrigerator temperature between 38°F and 42°F and freezer between 10°F and 20°F.
- 23 Plug office equipment into a time switch that turns off after working hours.
- 24 Institute a formal policy to turn off equipment when possible.
- 25 If available, use the standby mode on equipment, such as energy saver buttons on copiers.
- 26 Review your water bill monthly for indications of leaks, spikes or other problems, and call the utility company if anything is unusual.
- 27 Install water-efficient shrubs or ground cover in place of lawns.
- 28 Install rain shut-off devices as part of irrigation/landscape control measures.

## Commercial buildings are key pollution sources.

Externally, they contribute to 18% of the US's total CO<sup>2</sup> emissions. CO<sup>2</sup> or carbon dioxide gas is produced from composting and fossil fuels that release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and create global warming. Internally, pollution can come from building materials, cleaning and maintenance products, heating/cooling systems, pesticides and even furnishings. Employees and maintenance staff exposed to hazardous substances are more likely to get sick and have health problems, which can impact their productivity. Reducing pollution and hazardous materials keeps everyone healthier, happier and more productive.

### REDUCING POLLUTION AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

- 29 Buy unbleached and/or chlorine-free paper products (copy paper, paper towels, coffee filters).
- 30 Buy recycled/remanufactured toner and ink-jet cartridges for your office machines.
- 31 Buy rechargeable batteries and appliances, such as hand-held vacuum cleaners and flashlights.
- 32 Recycle and/or properly dispose of all hazardous office supplies such as spent toner and ink-jet cartridges, fluorescent bulbs, batteries, paint and electronics.
- 33 Make it easy to reduce litter: provide plenty of recycling and waste containers, especially outdoor ashtrays (Cigarette butts are the largest source of litter in the U.S. – 50%!).
- 34 Buy cleaners, paints, batteries and other supplies in optimally-sized containers for your office to avoid unnecessary packaging as well as left-over and expired materials.
- 35 Use low VOC paint (Volatile Organic Chemicals, emitted from certain solids) and avoid particle board with formaldehyde when building new structures or redecorating.
- 36 Correct situations that attract pests by proper food storage, garbage storage and landscaping.
- 37 Use biological controls, pest resistant plants and traps, baits and barriers.

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THIS LIST IS JUST A START. THERE ARE HUNDREDS MORE THINGS YOU CAN DO. ON THE BACK ARE SOME RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION CONTINUE TO MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT.

## The average American uses 650 lbs. of paper a year.

This consumes 5.5 trees, over 2000 gallons of water, 150 gallons of oil, and over 1300 kilowatts of energy. In the U.S., 43,000 tons of food is thrown out every day, and only one-tenth of waste produced is recycled. Businesses contribute to about 40% of waste. Reducing paper use and waste requires not only recycling and use of recycled products, but also maximizing use of the paper you buy.



### OTHER RESOURCES

#### **U.S. Green Building Council**

Certifies buildings as complying with LEED  
(Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards  
[www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

**Department of the Environment, San Francisco**  
An excellent resource for information on all things  
related to sustainability  
[www.sfenvironment.com](http://www.sfenvironment.com)

#### **Excess Access**

A site dedicated to help businesses donate and reuse materials  
[www.excessaccess.com](http://www.excessaccess.com)

#### **Energy Star**

The federal energy saving program  
[www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

#### **Green Products**

Provides a variety of environmentally friendly products,  
ranging from cleaning products to roofing material  
[www.greenproducts.net](http://www.greenproducts.net)

### SOURCES FOR THIS DOCUMENT

[www.homestead.com/prosites-closetheoop/didyouknow.html](http://www.homestead.com/prosites-closetheoop/didyouknow.html)

#### **Buildings and the Environment: a Statistical Summary (EPA)**

[www.epa.gov/greenbuildings/pubs/gbstats.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/greenbuildings/pubs/gbstats.pdf)

#### **Energy Information Administration**

[www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)

#### **"Remarkable Recycling Facts"**

[www.clearwater-fl.com/gov/depts/solid\\_waste/docs\\_pub/facts.asp](http://www.clearwater-fl.com/gov/depts/solid_waste/docs_pub/facts.asp)  
[www.sfenvironment.com/articles\\_pr](http://www.sfenvironment.com/articles_pr)



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