

CLARK COUNTY GREEN TOOLKIT



Resources to help your business increase efficiencies, reduce waste and **go green!**



CLARK COUNTY WASHINGTON
PUBLIC WORKS
SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

The Clark County Green Toolkit is a comprehensive resource developed to support local businesses in adopting sustainable practices that benefit the environment, community and bottom line.

Whether you're just beginning your sustainability journey or looking to enhance existing efforts, this toolkit offers guidance across a wide range of topics, from recycling and composting to green purchasing and stormwater management.

USING THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to be user-friendly, flexible and actionable. Each section focuses on a specific sustainability topic, as detailed in the table of contents.

You can use the toolkit as a step-by-step guide or focus on the sections most relevant to your operations. Many of the strategies are low-cost or no-cost and can be implemented immediately.

For personalized support, training, or to request materials, contact the Clark County Green Business team at info@clarkgreenbiz.org.

Table of contents

1. **RECYCLING AND REDUCTION**
2. **REUSE**
3. **FOOD WASTE REDUCTION**
4. **HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**
5. **STORMWATER**
6. **WATER**
7. **ENERGY**
8. **PURCHASING**
9. **TRANSPORTATION**
10. **GREENING YOUR EVENTS**

1

RECYCLING AND REDUCTION

Recycling conserves resources and prevents pollution, so take action to ensure your workplace recycles right.

Recycling done right

- Stay informed about the latest recycling information and provide recycling training to employees at least once a year, contact info@clarkgreenbiz.com to schedule a presentation.
- Post clear signage and recycling guides above recycling containers.
- Always place recycling and garbage containers together.
- Always keep recyclables loose and never bagged.
- Know what items are required to be recycled.
- Consider developing programs to recycle materials such as film plastic or block foam, which aren't accepted in mixed recycling.

Conduct a waste evaluation

Identifying the types and quantities of waste generated at your business will help you understand the effectiveness of your current recycling and waste reduction programs. The information you gather in the evaluation process will be useful for determining where to focus your attention for making improvements.

Clark County and [Waste Connections](http://WasteConnections.com) can guide your evaluation process. To conduct a waste evaluation, contact Ian.Blackburn@WasteConnections.com to obtain a waste audit guide, then walk through your business and inspect waste containers in different areas of operation and document your observations.

Look for areas of high waste, areas such as break rooms and shipping and receiving areas.

- What types of materials are being discarded?
- Are there signs to indicate which materials belong in each waste container?
- Are the containers in a convenient location?

Once you've completed your waste audit form, you can send the data and photos for further analysis to the Waste Connection's Commercial Recycle Coordinator Ian Blackburn at Ian.Blackburn@WasteConnections.com.

Reduce

Here are some examples of waste reduction that can be applied to all businesses:

- Use reusable dishes, mugs and glassware.
- Ensure printers are set to default to double-sided printing.
- Drink tap water instead of bottled water.
- Ask suppliers to reduce their packaging materials in shipments to your business.
- Eliminate single use plastic products such as plastic utensils and straws.
- Buy in bulk to eliminate packaging.



2

REUSE

Repair, resell, rent, and repurpose are all reuse activities. Incorporating reuse has huge environmental benefits because reuse extends the life of manufactured products.

Business reuse strategies

- Use reusable dishware and hand towels in break rooms and kitchens.
- Reuse incoming product packaging such as cardboard boxes and bubble wrap for outgoing shipments.
- Buy durable goods and maintain/repair current products.
- Reuse bags, containers and other items.
- Borrow or rent items you use infrequently.
- Sell or donate unwanted items instead of throwing them out.
- Buy used items, when possible, to save money and waste.

Material exchange

Do you have a waste product from your process that could be used by someone else? Exchanging unwanted resources with another business could be a viable option to extend the lifespan of those materials.

Donate or resell

- Donate furniture and extra supplies to a charitable organization or resell items in online exchanges such as Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace.

Employee engagement

- Encourage employees to bring in ideas for reuse within the office.
- Host workshops or team challenges to generate innovative solutions for repurposing materials.
- Recognize and reward efforts that result in significant waste reduction.

Tracking progress

Implement a system to track the impact of your reuse initiatives. This could include metrics on waste reduction, cost savings, and participation rates. Sharing these results with your team and stakeholders can motivate continued efforts and highlight the tangible benefits of your sustainability practices.



3 FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

Each year, about 40% of the food produced in the United States goes to waste. Food waste and food loss occurs at farms, manufacturers, consumer-facing businesses, and homes. Grocery retailers, restaurants, institutions, and food service providers account for 40% of food waste by weight.

Whether it is food leftover on a plate or scraps from prepping for a menu item, there are many opportunities to make changes and cut back food waste.

Here are some strategies that your businesses can implement to prevent food waste. We're here to help you waste less and save money!

Food waste tracking

- Use a [log sheet](#) to track which foods get tossed and the reasons why, i.e. spoilage, over production, etc.

Improving inventory management

- Use data gathered from tracking your waste to adjust ordering and production planning.
- Track historically low volume days to adjust PAR levels during those days.

Purchasing

- Buy reusable containers or bottles for condiments instead of single-use packets.
- Consider purchasing “imperfect” produce, i.e. produce with bruises, bumps, discoloration.

Menu planning

- Minimize the range of ingredients used to maximize cross-utilization between dishes.

- Transition to trayless dining to reduce food purchase costs and food waste.
- List recommended serving sizes for each menu option.
- Offer smaller portion and plate sizes, i.e. regular or half-size options.
- Incorporate leftovers from the day before into new dishes, i.e. leftover vegetable scraps can be used in soups or sauces.
- Sell day-old items such as breads, pastries, etc., at a discount.
- Eliminate garnishes that don't get eaten.
- Ask customers if they want complimentary food such as bread or chips and salsa before setting it down on the table.

Storage

- Use clear storage containers so staff can see what is available and how fresh it is.
- Freeze leftover fruits and vegetables before they go bad instead of throwing them away.

Resources

- [86 Food Waste](#) restaurant toolkit
- [Hotel Kitchen](#) toolkit
- [EPA Food Loss Prevention Checklist](#)
- [EPA Resources for Sustainable Management of Food](#)

Food recovery hierarchy

When thinking about strategies to minimize food waste, it is helpful to look at the [Wasted Food Scale](#), a tool developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



4 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Businesses are legally responsible for knowing if any of their wastes are dangerous and how much they generate.

Use the following guidelines to learn how to identify and manage your business's dangerous waste.

What is dangerous waste?

Waste is dangerous when it poses a threat to human health or the environment. Dangerous waste has many forms but can be identified as showing characteristics of ignitability, reactivity, explosiveness, corrosiveness and more.

General requirements

- Label dangerous waste as dangerous waste, flammable, corrosive, toxic or reactive.
- Keep containers closed and use secondary containment to prevent spills.
- Know how much dangerous material is kept on site and the timeframe of accumulation.
- Dispose of dangerous waste properly.
- Train employees on handling, storage, disposal and clean up.

Designate your waste and determine your generator status

The amount and type of waste a business produces and accumulates determines their "generator status," which influences the types of regulations they fall under for waste management.

Visit the [Washington State Dept of Ecology generator status](#) webpage to find your generator status.

Storing dangerous materials

- Have [Safety Data Sheets](#) on file for every dangerous material on site.
- Follow all warning labels.

Spill response

- Make sure a spill plan is in place and a spill kit is accessible.
- Train employees on what to do when a spill occurs.
- Have the local Ecology Spill Response unit's phone number on hand.

Disposing of dangerous waste

- Hazardous and dangerous waste should be disposed of through a permitted waste management and recycling facility.
- Medium to large quantity generators often hire a hazardous waste service provider to transport and recycle or dispose of their dangerous waste.

Reducing hazardous materials

Everyone from manufacturers to retail centers can benefit from eliminating dangerous products.

Here are some examples of how your business can reduce hazardous materials:

- Improve efficiency to use a smaller amount of hazardous material.
- Use the [EPA's Safer Choice program](#) to find alternative green products.
- Replace mercury-containing lights with energy efficient LEDs.
- Practice organic landscaping and pest control.

Additional resources

- [Clark County business hazardous waste](#)
- [Washington Department of Ecology on managing your business waste](#)
- [Washington State Dept of Ecology generator status](#)
- [Washington State Dept of Ecology dangerous waste](#)

5 STORMWATER

Stormwater is rain or snow melt that flows off roofs, yards, streets and parking lots into streams, lakes, streams, lakes, rivers and wetlands, often carrying pollutants. Stormwater is the #1 threat to water quality in urban areas in Clark County, especially during the rainy winter months. Clark County businesses share in the responsibility of managing stormwater and maintaining filtration and catch basins on their property.

The following is a sampling of best practices to manage stormwater and prevent pollution at your business:

Pollution prevention

- Reduce number of impervious surfaces.
- Catch oils and other fluids from vehicle and machine maintenance.
- Surround hazardous waste with secondary containment barriers.
- Have spill response supplies readily available.
- Train employees on how to contain spills and call [Ecology Spill Response](#) in the event of a spill.
- Wash water is wastewater and must drain to sanitary sewer.

Vehicles and machinery

- Cover machinery and equipment stored outside to protect rainfall from picking up contaminants.
- [Don't Drip and Drive](#) - Host events to check vehicles for oil leaks in the parking lot.

- Wash vehicles and machinery in areas where water drains to a wastewater treatment facility (i.e. a regulated carwash, decanting facility, etc.).

Storage

- Keep dumpsters and recycling carts covered when not in use.
- Garbage compactors must be connected to the sanitary sewer.
- Store hazardous waste indoors or in secure sheds.

Landscaping

- Install rain gardens in areas of landscape that puddle or flood when it rains.
- Use plants with strong root structures that prevent erosion and help water infiltrate the soil.
- Eliminate use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.
- Slow down water flow on the property using catch basins, riparian buffers, vegetation, etc.
- Disconnect downspouts to infiltrate the soil instead of draining onto impervious surfaces.
- Clear stormwater drains of leaves, debris and nuisance plants regularly.
- Do not blow leaves into the street.

Raise awareness about the connection between storm drains and water quality by [marking or stenciling your storm drains](#) with this important message "Protect Stormwater - Only Rain in Drain"

Stormwater Partners

For more detailed information about pollution prevention, maintaining stormwater infrastructure, responding to spills, landscaping, dumpster maintenance and surface cleaning visit the [Stormwater Partners](#) webpage.

Additional resources

[Friends of Trees](#)

[Catch Basin Cleanout Program](#)



stormwaterpartners.com

6 WATER

Dry summers and rainy winters make southwest Washington a unique place for water conservation and pollution prevention. While water conservation benefits the environment, it can also save businesses time and money. Use the following examples to implement water conservation at your business.

General water conservation

- Be conscious of water usage and its impact on fresh water supply.
- Install efficient water devices such as automatic faucets, low-flow toilets, water saving showerheads, and efficient water heaters and water-using appliances.
- Meter water usage to detect leaks.
- Educate employees on the importance of water conservation and pollution prevention.

Reuse water

- Manufacturers can recirculate water for performing cooling operations.
- Reuse wastewater (“graywater”) for other industrial uses, fountains or fire protection.
- Collect rainwater or irrigation runoff for reuse (this is called water harvesting).

Landscaping

- Use drip and other low-flow irrigation to maximize water infiltration into the soil.
- Do not use chemical fertilizers as they run-off the land and contribute to eutrophication.
- Water the landscape in the early morning or overnight to limit water loss to evaporation.

- Minimize high-maintenance grass and plant drought-resistant plants.
- Use mulch around plants and trees to retain moisture.
- Set irrigation system to only water landscaped areas (not walkways and parking areas).
- Disconnect downspouts to directly water the landscape or lawn.

Pollution prevention and pre-treatment

- Replace garbage disposals/grinders with strainers to manually remove organic material from the water stream (reducing organic content in wastewater that causes eutrophication).
- [Know what to flush.](#)
- Learn more about [water pretreatment programs](#) from the City of Vancouver.
- Visit Clark Regional Wastewater District's [Pollution Prevention page.](#)



7 ENERGY

Reducing energy consumption saves money and helps protect the environment.

Installing energy efficient equipment, adjusting heating and cooling settings, and making changes to routine practices will reduce spending on utilities and may also increase employee comfort. Even if you don't own your building there are still plenty of opportunities to cut energy waste.

Upgrade equipment

- Switch to LED lighting.
- Buy energy efficient equipment - [Purchase Energy Star qualified](#) products or have equivalent energy conservation certifications.
- Replace refrigerators more than 10 years old.

Track and monitor energy use

- Watching and tracking metered energy usage can assist your business in improving energy conservation over time.
- Join [Energy Star Portfolio Manager](#).

Encourage employees to act

- Turn off lights when space is unoccupied or when daylight is sufficient.
- Ensure all printer/copiers are switched off or set to sleep mode during non-business hours.

Renewable energy

- Purchase renewable energy credits through [Clark Public Utilities Green Lights](#).

Additional resources

- [Clark Public Utilities Business Energy Efficiency Programs](#)
- [Energy Trust](#)





PURCHASING

Purchasing sustainable products and services can have great power in reducing your business's environmental impact and influencing upstream and downstream impacts.

The following is meant to guide and give examples for improving your own practices by setting goals, creating policy and developing specific criteria for a set list of products.

Step one:

Evaluate the products and services your business uses and prioritize areas to make improvements.

Step two:

Develop purchasing goals and a [policy](#).

Step three:

Create a Green Purchasing List of products and services.

Step four:

Train employees.

Green purchasing lists

Creating a standardized list of environmentally preferable products and services can help your organization purchase sustainably. The list can recommend buying certain items and/or prohibit unsustainable or toxic items. As you begin evaluating new products, consider pilot projects to test and gather feedback to help inform a full transition.

The following lists provide examples that your business can use in creating your own green purchasing list.

General guideline examples

- Purchase products that can be reused, repaired and/or recycled.
- Purchase products with recycled content.
- Purchase local products and services.
- Avoidance of toxic and hazardous products.
- Purchase for energy-efficiency and water conservation.
- Purchase used or surplus goods.

Ecolabels and standards

Third party certifications are useful to verify environmental attributes and to avoid making purchases based on false or misleading environmental claims.

- [Sustainable electronics purchasing](#)
- [EPA Safer Choice](#)
- [Green Seal](#)

Facilities product examples

- Green cleaning products including Green Seal certified products (or equivalent certification).
- Bathroom tissue containing post-consumer recycled content.
- Paper towels containing post-consumer recycled material. Replace with reusable towels when possible.
- Plastic can liners containing recycled content.
- Tap water instead of bottled water (field work is exempt).
- Light bulbs upgraded to LEDs.
- Replace single-use batteries with rechargeable batteries when possible.

Landscaping examples

- Eliminate or reduce purchasing of harmful chemicals including pesticides, herbicides and artificial fertilizers.
- Purchase compost that is locally produced.
- Replace gas-powered tools with electric tools.

Office product examples

- Copy paper containing 30-100% post-consumer recycled material.
- Electronic equipment with Energy Star® certifications (or equivalent certification).
- Non-aerosol keyboard cleaners including reusable brushes, microfiber dusters and manual air blowers.
- Non-toxic dry erase board cleaners including EPA Safer Choice products. For list of products, search "dry erase" on the [EPA Safer Choice website](#).
- Printer ink/toner cartridges that are recyclable through the manufacturer.
- Printers that are duplex capable and automatically sleep/shutdown when not in use.
- Non-Vinyl banners and labels.

Vehicle product examples

- Antifreeze with recycled content (from a permitted RCRA facility).
- Re-refined motor oil.
- Re-refined universal tractor fluid.
- Vehicles that are electric, hybrid or have high fuel efficiency.
- Products to maximize vehicle range/mileage.

9

TRANSPORTATION

Businesses can decrease air emissions and pollution by offering education and incentives to employees

for vehicle maintenance, carpooling, using public transit, or using alternative transportation to get to work. Use the examples below to reduce the environmental impact of your business's travel.

Encourage green transportation

- Give employees gifts or other incentives to carpool.
- Provide prime "carpool only" parking spaces.
- Provide employees with public transportation incentives and directions.
- Add signs in parking lots that encourage drivers to reduce their idling time.
- Adjust work schedules to reduce employee time spent in rush-hour traffic.
- Purchase electric or hybrid vehicles for your fleet.

Encourage cycling or walking to work

- Provide bicycle parking.
- Provide showers for employees.
- Offer gifts to employees that cycle or walk to work.
- Provide a bike repair stand and toolkit.
- Increase pedestrian signage in your area.

Host green events

- Check employee cars for oil leaks to prevent water pollution.
- Host an employee bicycle repair day.
- Volunteer for a road-side litter clean-up event to discourage throwing garbage out of vehicles.



Share tips for environmentally friendly driving

- Accelerate gently.
- Maintain a steady speed or use cruise control.
- Anticipate traffic and avoid driving during high-traffic times.
- Avoid high speeds.
- Coast to decelerate.
- Remove unneeded weight from the vehicle.
- Remove roof racks and trailers when not in use.
- Keep tires properly inflated.
- Do not throw litter from the vehicle.
- Cover loads to prevent accidental littering.

Additional resources

- [EPA Green Vehicle Guide](#)
- [Commuter Trip Reduction](#)
- [C-Tran](#)
- [C-Tran Vanpool](#)
- [Bike More Challenge](#)

10

GREENING YOUR EVENTS

Clark County Green Business is excited to share tips for having a more sustainable holiday season, especially when planning your holiday parties. The most effective way to host a green event is to plan for sustainability from the beginning. By asking questions, planning ahead, and considering the environment, an event of any size can be made more sustainable.

Decorations

- If you host an event annually, avoid putting the date on print materials and decorations, so you can reuse the same decorations year after year.
- Rather than buying new, consider used decorations from thrift stores or online resale marketplaces.

Food options

- Avoid bottled water where possible.
- Purchase products and services that promote sustainability, such as fair-trade coffee or organic and locally grown foods.
- Offer seasonal fruit and vegetables.
- Consider how to serve the food for the least waste— buffet, sit-down, a-la-carte.
- Bring awareness to employees by providing information on the source of all food and beverages, especially if fair trade or local.
- Donate leftover food to a food rescue organization. Review the [Charitable Food Donation](#) page for guidance.

Venue considerations (for offsite events)

- Find a venue that shares similar values/policies as your business.

- Ensure the space can be set up for composting and recycling.
- Choose a venue that reduces transportation needs.

Waste and recycling

- Use the Waste Connections event planning guide for managing and minimizing waste at community, family, and corporate events.
- If needed, contact Waste Connections to request equipment from their [event lending library](#).
- Setup a system for collecting recyclables and food scraps. Reach out to our Green Business team if you need assistance for your business!
- Research available waste options and know where to take materials.
- Use signs for recycling and food waste containers. If you need signs, you can request free materials through our Workplace Recycling Resources Form.

