



Business Recycling Requirements

Metro's New Program to Increase Regional Recycling

September 2008



History

Metro works with 25 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area to meet the region's recycling and waste reduction goals. For the last eight years, Metro and local governments have provided a free education and technical assistance program called Recycle at Work. Through the Recycle at Work program, Metro and local jurisdictions send recycling specialists to businesses to help them with recycling efforts. Clear progress has been made as a result of this program, but businesses still dispose of more than 100,000 tons of recyclable paper and containers annually.

Metro explored options for increasing business recycling by convening public and private work groups and through stakeholder outreach conducted from 2003 to 2006. More than 1,000 people provided advice on approaches to increase business recycling. The Metro Council, after considering the costs and benefits of potential approaches, directed staff to develop a required business recycling program.

Between February and May 2008, Metro met with local business groups and elected officials for their input on a possible business recycling requirement. The outreach efforts were supported by article submissions in local chamber newsletters, newspaper coverage, a survey and a web page.

New Program

The new program, Business Recycling Requirements, requires local businesses to recycle all types of paper and certain containers such as plastic bottles, aluminum cans and glass. Because most businesses already recycle, this requirement simply formalizes such practices. For those businesses that do not currently recycle, the requirement asks that they recycle the same items residents already recycle at home. And to help businesses recycle, local governments will continue providing education and technical assistance through the Recycle at Work program.

Generally, a business or property manager would comply with the ordinance by doing the following:

- 1. Provide recycling containers for employees.**
- 2. Post signs and instructions on how to recycle.**
- 3. Recycle paper and containers.**

Metro will collaborate with local governments to identify challenges and opportunities for improvement in complying with the Business Recycling Requirements, rather than focus on a penalty approach.

Effects on the Community

- **Consistent service standards:** The business recycling requirements provide a level playing field for all businesses. Currently, the inconsistent recycling requirements and variable services offered throughout the region can confuse and frustrate businesses.
- **Potential cost savings and revenue:** Some business may see disposal costs decrease as they recycle more and may generate income by selling their recyclable paper and cardboard.
- **Increased supply to local recyclers:** The increase in paper recycling would support Oregon paper mills. Currently, paper collected in the Metro region provides less than 11 percent of total paper mill needs; the rest of the paper must be shipped in from outside our region.
- **Reduced environmental impact:** Increased business recycling means fewer valuable materials sent to a landfill. Energy and natural resources are conserved, and pollution is prevented. The net environmental benefit of the business recycling requirements program is estimated to be \$10.22 million for 80,000 tons of additional recovery.
- **Public Preference:** Surveys show that residents overwhelmingly support requiring businesses to recycle. The City of Portland has mandated business recycling since 1996. Metro is proposing to apply components of this mandate regionwide.

Get Involved!

Local governments must establish the new recycling requirements by February 27, 2009.

To learn more about the program, visit:

www.oregonmetro.gov/businessrequirements

For free recycling assistance and resources for your workplace, visit

www.RecycleAtWork.com or call Metro Recycling Information at 503-234-3000.



Contact Information

For more information on the program, contact :

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About Metro

Metro regulates solid waste and recycling in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties. As the regional government that serves 1.4 million people who live in the 25 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area, Metro provides planning and other services that protect the nature and livability of our region.