

Reducing and Recycling Packaging Waste

Waste series

As a business you will be generating waste made up of a range of materials, including plastic, glass, metal, cardboard and likely food waste. All this waste costs your business money; not just the money to have the waste picked up and disposed of, but also the money that was spent to buy the product, transport it, store it, and handle it. Additionally, any waste going to landfill takes valuable resources out of the economy and has a negative environmental impact.

Reducing packaging waste

The waste hierarchy (see figure 1) outlines the range of actions you can take with regards to your waste.

Preventing or reducing the waste in the first place can generate the most savings and reduce your impact on the environment. Even if you don't pay directly for a commercial waste pick-up, it will also save you money by reducing the amount of products you need to purchase.

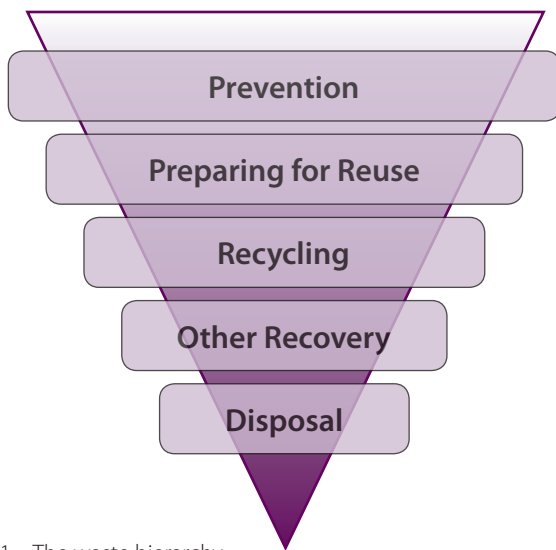


Figure 1 – The waste hierarchy

What do you know about the waste you produce?

- **How much waste is produced?** Start by measuring your waste to understand where you are starting from. You can get an idea of how many bins you have and how full they are. If you have a commercial waste pick-up, check with your waste contractor what information they can provide.

- **What is the most common type of waste produced?** Understanding the composition of your waste helps you identify the most common waste you produce (e.g. cardboard, glass, plastic). This gives you a good idea of where to start with reduction and make the quickest wins.

Did you know? Over 262,000 tonnes of mixed waste is produced each year by the Hospitality and Food Service sector in Scotland.

Top tips to reduce packaging waste

- Buy in bulk – cut down on both cost and packaging; this could be anything from cleaning products, guest toiletries or dry goods.
- Avoid unnecessary printing costs; only print documents when necessary and print on both sides (duplex setting).
- Avoid or reduce use of bottled water – offer tap water in jugs or bottle your own water on site using refillable bottling stations instead.
- Avoid single use items, where possible, like small sachets of coffee, sugar, sauces or disposable cups and cutlery.
- Work with suppliers to reuse packaging – where possible, only opt for suppliers that take back packaging or actively work to reduce packaging.

Go to <http://challenge.zerowastescotland.org.uk/> to take the Zero Waste Challenge and find out how you can reduce waste in your business and save money now.

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Recycle your waste

There will be waste that you cannot avoid and that you will be looking to recycle. Recycling is the processing of used and waste materials into new products. Generally about 70-75% of waste most businesses produce can be recycled.

Legislation – From 1 January 2014, all businesses and organisations in Scotland are required to segregate all of their paper, card, glass, plastics and metal at source for separate collection in line with the Waste (Scotland) Regulations. For more information on the regulations visit www.resourceefficientscotland.com/regulations

Tips for recycling in your business

- **Segregate as much as possible** – are you separating out all the key recyclable wastes? The more effectively you segregate materials from your general waste, the less landfill tax you will pay. Check with your council or waste contractor about your options.
- **Use clear signage** – this will make it easy for customers and staff to use the bins correctly and to help prevent recyclables ending up in the wrong bin. The Recycle for Scotland website has free to access material to help you and is available at <http://rfspostercreator.com/>
- **Choose the right bins** – if you are paying for larger bins, but they are often only half full when picked up, you could save money by either switching to smaller bins or less frequent uplifts. If your bins are in a publicly accessible place, it may be useful to lock them to ensure they are used appropriately.

- **Compact it** – a compactor will help to reduce the physical volume of the recyclables, which is particularly useful for many of the bigger items such as cardboard. If you are charged per bin lift this will reduce the number of uplifts and help save money.
- **Provide training** – if you have staff members, ensure they are instructed on which materials go in each bin and the importance of doing so (i.e. to save money, avoid waste contractor penalties for contamination of segregated wastes and be legally compliant). Provide information in different languages where relevant.

Further advice

For more information on opportunities to reduce and recycle packaging waste see:

Business Resource Centre – online search tool that provides you with refuse and recycling services in your area www.resourceefficientscotland.com/tool/business_resource_centre

Questions to ask your waste contractor – suggested questions you can ask your waste management contractor when negotiating a new contract: www.resourceefficientscotland.com/sites/default/files/Questions%20to%20ask%20your%20waste%20and%20recycling%20contractor.pdf

For further advice contact Resource Efficient Scotland, www.resourceefficientscotland.com or call 0808 808 2268.

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Did you know?

From April 1 2014, Landfill tax at £80 per tonne is charged on all waste going to landfill, making recycling often a more commercially savvy way to deal with waste.