

RECYCLING IN OFFICE SPACES

FACT SHEET

▶ CORRUGATED CARDBOARD DISPOSAL BAN

Corrugated cardboard is not garbage. Starting **April 1, 2018**, the landfill will **not accept** clean and dry corrugated cardboard.¹ It must be reused or recycled. Corrugated cardboard (pictured below) is defined as three or more layers of paper with the middle layer rippled or corrugated.



▶ CHALLENGES TO RECYCLING IN OFFICE SPACES

This fact sheet provides useful information to help offices keep corrugated cardboard out of the landfill and overcome typical recycling challenges, including infrastructure limitations, training and buy-in of staff, and recycling subscription concerns.

▶ VALUE OF OFFICE RECYCLING

- **Impact Lincoln.** Offices generate a considerable amount of paper and cardboard waste. Over 77% of paper product waste generated from an office building is recyclable. From there, 37% of the fiber from recycled paper products is used to make new products.²
- **Save Energy and Protect the Environment.** The energy spent to recycle materials like aluminum, plastics and paper is far lower than the amount of energy it takes to produce these products from raw materials. For example, processing recycled cardboard only takes 75% of the energy needed to make new cardboard.²
- **Enhance Your Company Image.** Implementing a successful recycling program will show employees and visitors alike that your office complex has a desire to be environmentally responsible. In Lincoln, companies can earn public recognition for their recycling leadership through the [Recycle Lincoln Leadership Recognition Program](#).

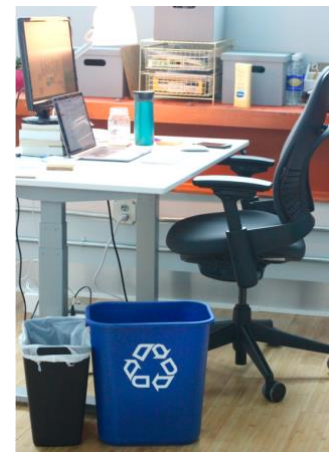
▶ OVERCOMING RECYCLING CHALLENGES IN THE OFFICE

- **Develop a Plan for Cardboard.** If your business does not currently recycle corrugated cardboard, begin planning as soon as possible (corrugated cardboard disposal ban effective as of April 1, 2018). Discuss convenient options to contract on-site recycling with your current garbage or recycling collector, or search for better services by contracting a new collector. Every [garbage collector](#) is required to offer recycling services to their commercial customers at least twice per year. You may also choose to self-haul cardboard to a recycling processor (see Links & Resources below). Public recycling sites are provided for **residential** use and should not be used by commercial establishments.

¹ LMC 8.32.040, Sect. C / Recyclable cardboard* shall not be accepted by the City for disposal in the City's public sanitary landfills effective April 1, 2018. (*Clean and dry corrugated cardboard.)

² <http://www.recycleacrossamerica.org/recycling-facts>

- **Inspect Your Garbage.** Assess your garbage and make a list of recyclables, organic and landfill items that are being generated in your office building. If you already have a recycling program in place, inspect recycling for contamination (the presence of garbage in recycling bins). Inspect all areas of your building, noting where certain types of recyclables are generated. You may uncover opportunities to reduce garbage at the source (i.e. reduce Styrofoam use or junk mail).
- **Project Your Garbage and Recycling Costs.** Note your monthly garbage collection bill. Work with your garbage collector to determine if you can reduce the number of garbage pickups and lower your costs, and how much it may cost to add recycling pickups. With reduced garbage pickups, you may be able to add recycling pickup for minimal net increase *and* make your office building more appealing to potential customers.
- **Identify Strategic Container Locations:**
 - Provide a recycling bin at each desk to make recycling quick and easy for employees.
 - Place communal recycling bins in high-traffic, common areas for employees that are away from their desks.
 - Place additional recycling bins in areas that experience high flows of recyclable materials, such as mail rooms, kitchens, and next to the copy machine.
 - There should always be a recycling container directly next to any garbage bin throughout the building. It should be just as easy for someone to recycle an item as it is to throw it in the garbage.
 - Exterior containers should also be located next to the regular garbage dumpsters and should be easily accessible to both employees and garbage/recycling collectors.
- **Use Consistent Bin Colors and Labelling.** Color coding of recycling and garbage bins is important. The industry standard is that garbage bins are black and recycling bins are blue. This color coding helps people know which materials go where. Uniform bin size is also important. Deskside recycling bins should all be the same size. Each bin should be labeled with a color-coded sign that includes images of what is recyclable. Including images of acceptable materials for each container will help overcome language barriers. For more information on best practices for signage, refer to [this guide on Signage and Labels Information](#). This will assist employees and visitors in putting garbage and recycling items in the correct bins. [Recycle Across America](#) provides uniform and customizable labels for purchase.
- **Create a Culture of Recycling.** Post signs and reminders of good recycling practices around the building. Management support and participation will go a long way in creating a culture of reducing garbage and maximizing the amount of materials recycled.
- **Focus on Identified Products and Garbage Streams.** Implementing a garbage reduction plan can be extensive. Consider first focusing on recycling one or two products that are most noticeable in your garbage stream, such as office paper and cardboard. When your facility can consistently recycle these products, begin focusing on other materials.
- **Consider Recycling Organics.** If your office building has a solid grasp on recycling standard materials, consider adding compostable items to your garbage diversion program. This might



include food scraps, napkins, paper towels, small cardboard containers, etc. Click here for a full list of [organic waste services](#) in Lincoln.

- **Maximize Space Efficiency.** On the exterior of your building, consider reducing the size of your garbage dumpster to accommodate additional recycling or composting dumpsters and carts. Contact your garbage collector to inquire about types and sizes of containers available. A great way to lower your monthly collection service costs and maximize space is to work with neighboring businesses to implement a shared waste hauling system. For an example, refer to this [shared waste hauling case study](#) from the Nebraska Recycling Council.
- **Monitor and Measure.** Measuring your garbage and recycling streams is vital not only for grant reporting, but for identifying improvement opportunities in your program. Work with your custodial staff and garbage/recycling collector to obtain measurements, monitor contamination (garbage mixed in with recyclables) and focus your educational efforts where needed.
- **Start an Office Green Team.** Gather individuals who care about your office's sustainability efforts to publicize, monitor and strengthen the recycling program. Custodians often have the most hands-on knowledge of your facility's garbage and recycling -- ask often for their valuable feedback. Employees will feel more willing to participate if the program is created, implemented and monitored by a group of their peers, with management and facility staff also participating. For more information, refer to this guide on [Commercial Green Teams](#).
- **Educate Employees.** Write it into your Employee Handbook or Training Manual to promote good recycling practices by every employee. This will instill proper recycling practices and increase recycling participation from orientation onward. This approach can be especially important for offices that experience high employee turnover rates. Provide this [Recycling Guide](#) to all employees in your office.
- **Get Financial Assistance.** Take advantage of the City's [Waste Reduction and Recycling Assistance Program \(WRRAP\)](#), which provides rebates of up to \$750 to start a recycling program. Look for local or state grants to help with additional funding if needed, such as those provided by the [Nebraska Recycling Council](#).
- **Set a Goal.** Set a goal to increase your facility's recycling rate. This is not only important for tracking purposes, but can also get the whole school excited about recycling. In order to set a goal, it's necessary to establish your baseline waste diversion rate. Estimate your diversion rate using the handy [Waste Diversion Rate Calculator](#).
- **Celebrate Success.** Create an atmosphere of pride by continually promoting the success of your recycling program. Report the amount of recyclables diverted from the landfill to employees and customers. Apply to the [Recycle Lincoln Leadership Recognition Program](#) and earn public recognition for your efforts.

LINKS & RESOURCES

- **Commercial Recycling Self-Assessment and Waste Diversion Rate Calculator**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/self-assessment.htm>
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/waste-diversion-calculator.htm>
- **Corrugated Cardboard Disposal Ban FAQ**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/corrugated-cardboard.htm>
- **Guide to Commercial Green Teams**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/fact-sheets/pdf/green-teams.pdf>

- **Guide to Selecting / Contracting for Garbage and Recycling Collection**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/fact-sheets/pdf/collection-contracting.pdf>
- **Local Composting Facilities**
<http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/pworks/solid-waste/recycle/business-composting.htm>
- **Local Garbage and Recycling Collectors**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/collectors.htm>
- **Multilingual Resources**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/multilingual-resources.htm>
- **Nebraska Recycling Council**
<http://www.nrcne.org>
- **Nebraska Recycling Council: Materials Management for Offices**
<http://nrcne.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Office-BMPs-Guide-Final.pdf>
- **Recycle Across America**
<http://www.recycleacrossamerica.org/>
- **Recycle Lincoln Leadership Recognition Program**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/wrrap/recognition.htm>
- **Recycling Guidelines by Material**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/pdf/guidelines-by-material.pdf>
- **Recycling Processing Centers**
 - Firststar Fiber, 402-894-0003, <https://firststarrecycling.com/>
 - Mid-America Recycling, 402-476-8502, <http://www.midamericarecycling.com>
 - Recycling Enterprises, 402-421-6655, <http://www.recyclelincoln.com/>
- **Recycling Signage and Labels**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/fact-sheets/pdf/recycling-signage.pdf>
- **WasteCare Corporation – Waste Recycling Considerations and Equipment for Offices**
<https://www.wastecare.com/Waste-Recycling-Equipment-Applications/Office-Waste-Recycling.htm>
- **Waste Reduction and Recycling Assistance Program (WRRAP)**
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/wrrap/>

For more information about recycling and Lincoln's corrugated cardboard diversion efforts, visit recycle.lincoln.ne.gov, email recycle@lincoln.ne.gov or call the Recycling Office at 402-441-8215.