

RECYCLING IN WAREHOUSES AND DISTRIBUTION CENTERS

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 WAREHOUSES AND DISTRIBUTION CENTERS

This fact sheet provides useful information to help warehouses and distribution centers keep corrugated cardboard out of the landfill and overcome typical recycling challenges, including: infrastructure challenges, managing subscription and recycling container costs, training employees on how and what to recycle, and minimizing contamination (presence of garbage) in recycling containers.

▶ VALUE OF WAREHOUSE AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER RECYCLING

- **Cost Savings.** For every ton of garbage diverted from the landfill, \$34.75 in disposal costs is avoided. Collection fees must still be paid when recycling, but the tipping fee is often less than landfilling or non-existent. Sometimes recycling high-value, clean materials, such as cardboard and metal, earn businesses extra revenue.
- **Enhance Your Business' Image.** Implementing a successful recycling program will show suppliers, vendors, and employees that your business has a desire to be environmentally responsible.
- **Efficiency.** If materials are wasted on the job, you pay twice: for purchase and for disposal. Managing a recycling program at the workplace helps you understand what is being discarded and how efficiently your employees are using materials that affect your bottom line.
- **Community Benefits.** Recycling helps delay the need for a landfill expansion, strengthen the local economy and protect the environment. For example, the energy required to recycle materials is far lower than the amount of energy it takes to produce new products with raw materials; for every 1000 tons of material recycled, two local jobs are created.

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.)

OVERCOMING RECYCLING CHALLENGES IN WAREHOUSES AND DISTRIBUTION CENTERS

- **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.
- **Inspect Your Garbage.** Assess your garbage and make a list of recyclables, organic and landfill items that are being generated in your facility. 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. Speak with experts (garbage and recycling collectors, Lincoln Solid Waste staff, and other professionals) on recycling options.
- **Make Space for Garbage and Recycling Containers.** Designate a space for all of your collection containers. This may involve clearing space previously used as stock storage. Ideally, garbage and recycling containers should be placed next to one another. It should be just as easy for someone to recycle an item as it is to throw it in the garbage.
- **Consider Compactors or Balers.** Warehouses and distribution centers produce a large volume of cardboard. It may be worth the investment to install compactors or balers. These machines compress materials, save space and reduce the need for frequent recycling pickups. This can lower collection service costs and reduce the need to acquire additional dumpsters or roll-offs. Check with local recycling processors to learn how they can help provide baling equipment.
- **Label Containers.** Use clear signage for all dumpsters, roll-offs, carts, and collection containers. Include images of what materials are accepted in each container to help employees become familiar with recycling practices. Images communicate across languages. If your facility employs multilingual individuals, make sure all signs, reminders, labels, and instructions are visibly translated.



Clearly label recycling bins with images of what is recyclable (left). Recycling dumpsters with a cutout help reduce contamination (center). Wooden pallets can be collected and recycled (right).

- **Reduce Contamination.** Contamination is the presence of garbage in recycling containers. Ask your collector for recycling-only dumpsters with restrictive openings for recyclables. Restrictive lids or slots can help reduce trash contamination because they allow employees to deposit only desired materials.
- **Develop a Plan for Wooden Pallets.** Find a processor who specializes in reclaiming pallets or work with suppliers to implement a two-way pallet system. This will help clear unwanted pallets from your facility relatively quickly.
- **Continually Communicate with Employees.** Engage all of your employees and staff by training them on how the new recycling program will work. Include recycling guidelines in new employee orientations and encourage everyone to become familiar with everyday recyclable materials and container locations in the workspace. Regularly discuss recycling and garbage progress with staff in meetings.
- **Start a Green Team.** Develop a Green Team comprised of employees representing different areas of your facility. Employees can help monitor and strengthen your recycling program. This team can take on the responsibilities of promoting your efforts, educating staff, reporting issues, etc. Refer to the [Guide to Commercial Green Teams](#) for more information.
- **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 waste reduction program. Look for local or state grants to help with additional funding if needed, such as those provided by the [Nebraska Recycling Council](#).
- **Celebrate Your 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

- **American Plastics Council Stretch Wrap Recycling Guide**
<https://plastics.americanchemistry.com/Stretch-Wrap-Recycling/>
- **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 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 Materials Exchange Program**
<http://www.knb.org/exchange.html>
- **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/wrrap/recognition.htm>
- **Recycling Processing Centers**
 - Firstar 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/>
- **WasteCare Corporation – Recycling Tips for Distribution Centers**
<https://www.wastecare.com/Waste-Recycling-Equipment-Applications/Distribution-Centers-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.