

PREVENT & SAVE

**Best Practice Guidelines
in Waste Management -
Grocery Retailers**

PREVENTION & MINIMISATION

Supplier Involvement

For small retailers, it can be quite difficult to reduce the amount of packaging you use as you rely on your suppliers for the packaging delivered to you, and generally do not have control over the design of this packaging.

However, there are a number of initiatives you can undertake.

Initially, you can communicate to staff and customers that you strive to use the least amount of packaging on your products and seek opportunities to reduce the level of packaging used wherever possible. This could be done in a packaging policy, or at a simpler level in a staff training booklet.

Secondly, you could write a letter to your suppliers informing them of this initiative, and asking them to confirm that they have made all efforts to minimise the amount of packaging they use on their products.

In addition it may be worth discussing solutions that improve the recyclability of the packaging sold to your customer where you can influence this. For example moving from Expanded Polystyrene to PET food trays involves moving to a more recyclable solution.

Packaging re-use systems are becoming more popular among retailers and local suppliers. These reduce the amount of single use packaging that a retailer has to manage once the product is delivered.

Some examples are:

- Bakery product delivered on returnable wooden trays
- Fruit and vegetables delivered in stackable, returnable plastic trays
- Milk and dairy product delivered in returnable steel cages on wheels
- Various products delivered on returnable blue rented pallets.
- Encourage your customers to reuse also by discounting coffee or tea sold in a reusable cup.

Other Prevention & Reuse Tips

There may be other opportunities to prevent waste or reuse material in your store that don't require supplier input.

For example:

- Allowing your suppliers to take back spare white pallets that you accumulate.
- Allowing customers to use cardboard boxes from deliveries to take their groceries home. Robust fruit boxes are ideal for this.

- Allow staff or customers to take away used plastic flower containers, mushroom punnets etc. for their own use. These are particularly good for farmers, gardeners, etc.
- Print internal documents on both sides of a page.
- Reuse envelopes for internal staff documents.
- If you use cooking oil on site, consider dispensing from bulk containers.

These types of opportunities come from working with staff, customers and other businesses in your area to see what can be re-used or recycled.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Staff Involvement – A Vital Ingredient

It is best to ask staff how to reduce waste and many retailers have found it beneficial to implement a “Green Team” where a number of staff from the business monitor the success of initiatives implemented and liaise with others to find new ideas on waste reduction or minimisation, through regular meetings. Appoint a Project champion who will lead and co-ordinate team activities.

The outcomes of these initiatives and approved ideas are communicated to management for appropriate attention.

The typical initiatives of a Green Team include:

- Monitoring the waste types, weights and costs to Waste Contractors.
- Training of staff (new and existing) on best practices in waste management.
- Signage of collection points and storage points for waste.
- Cleanliness of waste management areas.
- Initiation of projects to reduce weights and increase recycling.
- Liaison with suppliers with regard to waste minimisation.
- Introduction and monitoring of re-use systems.
- Tapping into benchmarking and experience from other stores.
- Periodic reviews on cost and effectiveness with main recovery operator.

Waste Contractor Involvement – Ask the Experts

The most important aspect of waste management is to have access to comprehensive data on the processing and collection of your waste. Your waste contractor should be supplying you with a breakdown (by weight) of all the waste which is being collected from your store. This means that you are aware of:

1. What your waste collection is costing,
2. Areas where waste or overuse may be occurring and
3. Areas where you can prevent or reduce waste and make savings.
4. Issues leading to the contamination of recycling or where recyclables are ending up in general waste.

Your waste contractor also has the most knowledge and experience of what materials can be recycled in your business.

If you have any queries about what can be recycled, or what condition the material needs to be in before it can be recycled, your waste contractor will know.

If you need more than one opinion, you will find local waste contractors (Recovery Operators) in your area on the Repak website at <https://repak.ie/recycling/recovery-operators/>.

Segregation is Key – Cost and Environmental Benefits

Waste segregation is a highly effective way of maximising recycling and minimising your waste costs and it is also very important to help maximise Ireland's recycling rates.

1. All clean paper/ cardboard and plastic types should be separated from other types of waste so that they can be recycled rather than being sent to energy recovery or landfill.
2. There must be clearly marked bins within the store for paper / cardboard, plastics and general waste. Place these in appropriate locations where a particular type of waste is produced and where people are working. For example it may not be a good idea to place a recycling bin in the part of the deli where food is prepared, however it would be a perfect location for a food waste bin.



3. Poor segregation in store will result in poorly segregated bins outside your premises. This could mean recycling bins that are contaminated and that need to be treated as general waste (which will be charged accordingly).
4. If you have a litter bin outside your store, it is unlikely that the contents will be suitable for recycling. It may be best to dedicate a general waste bin to this.
5. Colour code different types of waste e.g.
Green = Paper / Cardboard
Blue = Plastics
Brown = Food waste and certified compostable packaging
Black = General Waste

Ensure that your colour scheme and labelling is consistent throughout the store and understood by all permanent and external staff e.g. contract cleaners in order to avoid any potential confusion. If any wheelie bins outside your premises are a different colour from the others for a particular wastestream, request with your waste contractor that they are replaced if possible.

6. To monitor how well you are segregating waste and preventing contamination, collect waste in clear bags so that you can see what is being placed in them. The contents will likely tell you where these bags are coming from within the store.
7. For staff whose first language is not English or who have difficulty reading, use photographs as well as text when highlighting what goes in what bin.
8. All new staff should be briefed on how to segregate effectively and maintain waste collection areas, the store's environmental policies and / or the cost and environmental benefits of effective waste management.



PREPARATION OF WASTE FOR COLLECTION AND RECYCLING

It is important to task the Green Team with ensuring that areas of the business used for collection of waste are tidy, clearly marked and well organised.

Investigate the use of balers and compactors for handling waste on site. Balers are not only useful to compress recyclable waste such as cardboard and plastics (such as pallet wrap and bottle case wrap), depending on market conditions for recyclables they may also be collected at significantly lower rates than other types of waste. Compactors are also used to compact mixed waste or food waste however these normally require high volumes of waste.

A wide range of balers and compactors are available and can be leased, rented or purchased. If you have high volumes of both cardboard and plastics consider a twin chamber baler which will allow you to bale both materials at the same time.

Clean, segregated, baled (or compacted) waste material will attract a higher value as opposed to low value unprocessed waste.

The higher the value you can attract for your waste material, the quicker the payback period on any equipment you have acquired. If the payback period is too long and acquiring a baler cannot be justified, then it may be best to dedicate Recycling wheelie bin for cardboard only and clear soft plastics only.



Avoid the use of open top skips as they are the most expensive form of waste management and tend to be very difficult to control from a waste segregation point of view. These skips quickly fill with recyclable materials, general waste as well as compostable materials.

VOLUNTARY SYMBOL (FRANCHISE) GROUPS

Members of such groups should seek support from their group management in setting up and maintaining their waste management system. It is quite likely that there are already people within the group with responsibility for preventing waste and improving recycling streams.

TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS

In order to demonstrate progress against the current baseline it is useful to keep a record of improvements made. Ways to track this include:

- Photographic evidence of any new improvements in store.
- Records showing trends in costs and recycling rates from your waste contractor.
- Correspondence with suppliers in relation to packaging reduction.



- Green Team meeting minutes and staff suggestions.
- Records and photographs of any work or environmental initiatives undertaken at a local level – e.g. involvement with schools, tidy towns, beach cleans.

This information can be useful if you would like to submit an entry for a Pakman Award which rewards businesses and organisations for excellence in the areas of waste management and recycling.

HOW REPAK CAN HELP

If you would like to discuss opportunities to prevent packaging waste or reduce your waste bills please contact Brian or Colm.

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