



WASTE AUDITS FOR SCHOOLS



Why Complete a Waste Audit?

IT'S THE LAW--Under new legislation (Ontario Regulation 102), schools with more than 350 students are now required to complete a waste audit, develop a waste reduction workplan, and set up a source separation program.

A WASTE MANAGEMENT TOOL--A waste audit provides you with a blue print of where your school is NOW in waste management practises. By looking at a sample of waste, the overall waste composition of your operation can be estimated. The waste audit will tell you not only the type, quantity, or origin of waste produced but also the management policies and procedures that affect waste generation.

IDENTIFIES REDUCTION OPPORTUNITIES--A waste audit helps to identify wasteful practices and potential opportunities to increase efficiency and lower costs.

AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL--By participating in a waste audit, students can learn about waste generation and its impacts. Ideally students should be given the opportunity to "brainstorm" on how to reduce waste identified in the waste audit.

Who Should Complete the Waste Audit?

DO IT YOURSELF--If you want a class, or group of students and teachers to conduct the waste audit, guidance is available from government and the private sector. The Ministry of the Environment has published A Guide to Waste Audits and Reduction Work Plans for Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Sectors. For copies, call 1-800-565-4923, or 416-325-4000 in Toronto 1-800-668-9938. You can also view a copy of a waste audit at www.wrwcanda.com and go to School Resources.

INVITE SOME HELP--If you can't or don't want to do a waste audit yourself, you can pay someone else to do it; many consultants and waste haulers perform waste audits for a fee. If you would like a few names of consultants in your area, call the RCO 416-657-2797. You may be able to reduce the fee (and take advantage of an education opportunity) by providing student sorters to assist the consultant in the waste audit.

How to Complete the Waste Audit

STEP 1: A HISTORY LESSON

Get an idea of the current waste generated at your school. Review the school's waste record for the past 12 months to determine:

- how much waste was produced
- how often the waste is collected
- what happens to the waste after it leaves the school
- what has been done so far to reduce, reuse and recycle waste

STEP 2: TAKE A LOOK AROUND

The audit will look at the type and amount of waste generated in each area of the school. A building tour will tell you where your school's waste is produced and some of the reasons why. The tour may identify:

- places that generate a lot, a little, and average amounts of waste
- places of recycling activity
- custodial routines

STEP 3: MAKING PLANS

Based on the information gained in the building tour, the structure of the audit can be determined. The amount of waste and the period of time over which it is collected has a dramatic effect on the accuracy of the audit findings. No two weeks of an operation are exactly alike. It is important to select an audit sample which captures as many fluctuations as possible. Audit design and preparation will include:

- where the waste is produced and where it will be sampled
- how much waste will be generated
- how much waste will be sampled
- when the sampling will occur
- who will conduct the audit
- what equipment and space will be needed

STEP 4: GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY

During the "hands on" stage of the audit, waste is sorted by hand to determine its composition. It is very important to carefully label all materials at this point to determine their source. This is also an excellent time to collect additional information about common contaminants or specific packaging which can be reduced. In this hands-on stage you will:

- gather all waste and recyclables designated for weighing
- label and weigh all bags
- hand-sort materials and place them into individual waste- stream categories
- note contaminants in recyclable stream (ie. paper in the metal can recycling bin and vice versa)
- record findings and any observations

STEP 5: WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

After the raw data is compiled, you can determine:
how much waste is generated per year
the waste composition
how much material is diverted through 3Rs activities
how and why the waste is generated

THEN WHAT?

The waste audit provides you with a valuable tool to get to work reducing waste at your school. Look at your results and see which areas need the most work. How can your school's handling and sorting practises be improved? What new waste reduction programs are necessary (i.e. vermicomposting, paper recycling)? Is additional education for staff and students necessary to reduce waste? How can the students continue to be involved? Ask students for their suggestions on how to reduce waste around the school and encourage them to participate.