

# How to Green Your Office

Steps toward Sustainability:  
first steps  giant leap

## 1. Green your paper stream.

Paper accounts for roughly 40% of all municipal solid waste in the United States. Use both sides of every sheet of paper. Use the backs of already-used paper in fax machines, and as scratch pads. Don't print or photocopy e-mails, forms, and other documents unless absolutely necessary. With meeting handouts, ask staff members to share.

Recycled paper takes 70-90% less energy to produce than conventional paper. Staples offers 100% recycled copier paper and pads.

Design brochures and flyers to be printed on 8.5 x 11 sheets. When an 8.5 x 14 brochure gets printed, much of the large print sheet is cut away as waste. Consider using a self-mailer rather than consuming extra paper through use of envelopes.

Use chlorine-free paper if available. Chlorine is one of the major pollutants of our lakes and waterways, and has been linked to genetic defects and cancer. To reduce chlorine use, don't demand the brightest white paper available. There is nothing wrong with using paper rated in the 80's or low 90's.

Ask for vegetable-based inks for your print job, rather than petroleum-based. Soy is the most common, but there is also linseed or flax. Vegetable inks give off fewer VOC's (volatile organic compounds) that contribute to summertime ozone pollution. Avoid neon colors; their color is difficult to bleach out in the recycling process.  
*from <http://www.uic.edu/depts/ppad/uicycle/green.htm> and other sources*

## 2. Turn it off.



Leaving equipment on wastes considerable energy. 30 to 40% of computers and printers are left on overnight, and they are idle as much as 90% of the workday. Utilize the power save feature on computers and photocopiers throughout the day.

Set thermostats to relatively low temperatures in the winter (68 degrees) and moderately high temperatures in the summer (78 degrees). Ask staff members to dress accordingly.  
*www.flexyourpower.com/*

Remind staff to turn off lights when leaving rooms that are no longer in use. Switch office light bulbs to ENERGY STAR labeled compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) bulbs. Investigate new technologies which turn off lights when no one is in the room. And utilize natural bright light wherever possible. Adopt the Federal Energy Management Program "Office Energy Checklist"  
*www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/services/energy\_aware\_oec.html*

## 3. Recycle.



If your building does not already offer the service, look for an independent recycling firm that can come and pick up your paper, aluminum, glass and plastic on a weekly or biweekly basis.

Recycle toner cartridges from copiers and printers. Staples offers a credit for printer cartridges. Recycle batteries through the city's hazardous materials services.

Start an office compost program. Keep a sealed compost container in your office kitchen and schedule individual staff members to take turns taking the compost home to add to their own compost piles.

## 4. Use and Reuse.



Eliminate the use of paper, plastic dishware. Ban styrofoam. Provide staff with reusable "real china" coffee mugs, plates, and utensils. Have extra on hand for office visitors.

Reuse binders, file folders, envelopes, boxes. Choose rechargeable batteries where batteries are necessary. Repair and reupholster equipment and furniture rather than discarding. Buy durable goods in the first place so that they will hold up for reuse.  
*Read more at <http://legacyla.net/transformation/?p=112>*

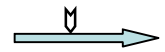
Joanne Poyourow

[www.LegacyLA.net](http://www.LegacyLA.net)

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## 5. Encourage others to join in.



Make it easy. Post clear instructions as to what is recyclable on or near recycling and compost bins. Place containers in highly trafficked, easy-to-access locations.

Post fun signs around the office and highlight conservation in your employee handbook. Invite staff members to bring to work items they can't recycle easily from home such as cell phones, batteries, and ink cartridges. Recognize employees who exemplify best environmental practices.

## 6. Green your travel.



Encourage use of green transportation to and from work. Offer incentives to encourage people to take public transportation, walk, bike, or car pool. Try telecommuting and video conferencing.



Air travel is much harder on the greenhouse effect than surface travel. Elect surface transportation rather than air, particularly for short "commuter" distances. And over the long-term, consider whether that business trip is really necessary. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/main.jhtml?xml=/travel/2006/07/29/etnofly29.xml&page=1>

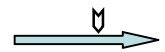
## 7. Go 'Climate Cool' through carbon credits.



You can offset the carbon dioxide emissions associated with your office's energy use and business travel by joining a "green tags" program. Green tags are energy credits created by renewable energy facilities that represent the environmental benefits of green power generation. If your office holds conferences or other events, consider offsets for all the travel to the event. [CarbonFund.org](http://CarbonFund.org), [DriveNeutral.com](http://DriveNeutral.com), [TerraPass.com](http://TerraPass.com)

Buying carbon offsets doesn't grant you authorization to waste, but it does help build the new business segment which is trying to capture and sequester our greenhouse emissions.

## 8. Green your product line.



Ask your suppliers if they offer earth-friendlier versions of your products: more energy-efficient, locally made, organic, made from recycled or sustainable materials, etc. Offer these to your customers, with an explanation of why they are better for the environment.

The County of Los Angeles offers industry-specific Waste Reduction Tips for Eating Establishments, Food Retailers, Health Care, Office and Educational, Retail Sales, and more.

[http://ladpw.org/epd/brtap/recyclingsite/waste\\_reduct\\_tips/waste.cfm](http://ladpw.org/epd/brtap/recyclingsite/waste_reduct_tips/waste.cfm)

Environmental Media Association offers "How to make a production green," "Standards for production offices & around the set" and other resources. [www.ema-online.org](http://www.ema-online.org)

## 9. Every year, commit to taking one new step.



## 10. Understand the shift.



Einstein once said: "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." ... Solving our environmental issues requires new ways of thinking—a reevaluation of previous goals, dreams, visions for society's future—a paradigm shift.

We're used to evaluating potential purchases on whether item A or item B costs less dollars. Now the cost we must compare is the impact on the earth's resources: the raw materials consumed in manufacture; the fossil fuels and corresponding greenhouse gas emissions of transporting the item from another continent; the landfill impact of the packaging; and whether we really *need* the item in the first place.

More at Paul Hawken, *Natural Capitalism*

Our future will be (must be) quite different from our economic and historic past. Welcome the Transformation!

Compiled by Joanne Poyourow from Co-Op America, University of Illinois at Chicago, U.S. Department of Energy, Environment Canada [http://www.ec.gc.ca/eco/wywd/work\\_e.html](http://www.ec.gc.ca/eco/wywd/work_e.html), and multiple other sources.

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