

Special Events: Recycling and Waste Management

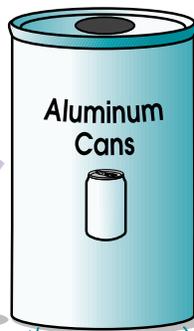
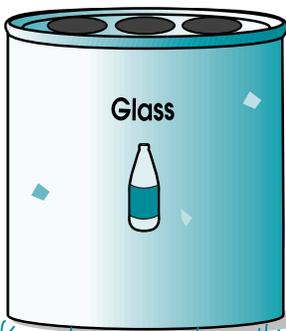
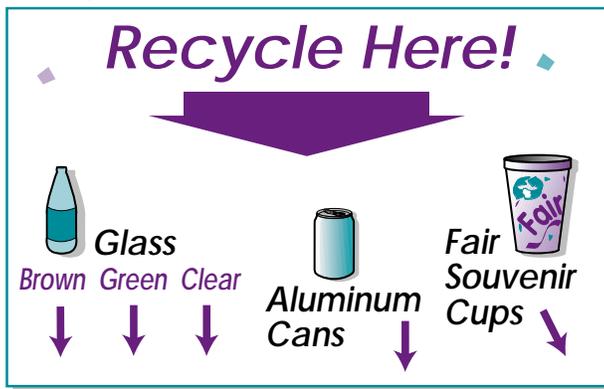
Special events entertain Wisconsin residents as well as benefit local communities and special interest groups. For most people, special events are a lot of fun, but for event organizers, they are a lot of work! A well-planned event requires cooperation, coordination, dedication, and attention to details. One important detail is managing all the trash and recyclables that a special event generates. This briefing paper will help you identify ways to manage and reduce these materials ... and obey the law too!

State Law

Wisconsin's Recycling Law requires everyone in the state to recycle whether they are at home, at work, or at a special event. Special event coordinators must make provisions for recycling:

- glass bottles and jars
- aluminum and steel/tin cans
- plastic containers (#1 & #2)
- newspapers
- corrugated cardboard
- office paper
- other items depending on community

Note: Some communities are served by incinerators and have special provisions for recycling. Some communities recycle additional items. Check with local officials.



Identifying and Reducing Your Waste Stream

In preparing for your event, try to predict the types of trash and recyclables that may be generated. The best way to do this is to ask vendors, concessionaires, and others what they plan to bring with them. They may bring cardboard, food containers, napkins, and paper or plastic cups and plates. Also, check with your waste hauler to determine the waste stream of past events.

Next, work with vendors, concessionaires, and haulers to identify how to reduce or recycle more of the waste stream. Consider:

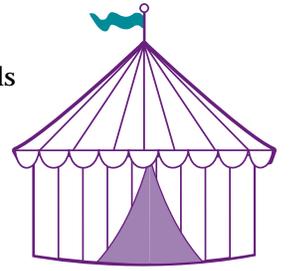
- ◆ Offering reusable beverage containers, such as mugs or pitchers, as promotional items for your event. Be aware that employees at concession stands must be trained how to refill them to minimize the risk of contamination. Check with your local health officials for details.
- ◆ Purchasing durable decorations and signs that can be used year after year.
- ◆ Requiring all concessionaires and vendors to use the same type of recyclable cups, glasses, or food containers. Work with them to identify suppliers and markets for the recyclables.

In the year 2000, the Festival Committee of the South East Wisconsin Waste Reduction Coalition assisted with the waste reduction and recycling efforts of 18 festivals. Together these festivals attracted over 850,000 people and with the Committee's help recycle a total of 6,380 pounds (over 3 ½ tons) of high-volume waste. Working cooperatively, these festivals were able to divert an additional 25% more waste from ending up in a landfill than they were able to do in years past. Way to go!!



Designing Your Recycling Program

Once you know the materials that may be generated, you can determine how and where to set up your event's recycling program. Your options will vary depending on the size of the event. Be realistic — work with your hauler to identify where you can best capture recyclables; consider:



- 1. Behind the scenes.** Here is where concessionaires and vendors control materials like cardboard and large metal, plastic, and glass containers.
- 2. Areas open to the public.** Here is where event participants and the public will be asked to recycle materials like newspapers and specific beverage and food containers.
- 3. Event Offices.** Here is where your staff will be asked to recycle office paper, newspapers, cardboard, bottles, and cans.

If you decide to recycle behind the scenes, be sure that these recycling bins or barrels are accessible to concessionaires and vendors only and secured to avoid contamination. Make certain that all concessionaires and vendors and their employees know about the recycling program and where bins or barrels are located.

If event participants and the public are going to recycle, be sure that recycling bins or barrels are readily available and easily accessible. Locate recycling bins or barrels close to trash receptacles near concession areas, rest rooms, entrances, and exits, and make sure they are clearly marked. Consider signs, color, and style to mark the difference between trash and recycling containers. Remember, event goers are not always as attentive as you may want them to be.

Recycling "stations" staffed by volunteers who assist the public may be necessary the first year you decide to use a public recycling program. Whatever you choose to do, be sure to monitor the recycling barrels or bins. Usually it is not recyclables in the trash that cause problems, but trash in the recycling bin.

Milwaukee Irish Fest and Greenwish Village – The “Green” Festival –

Going green takes on a whole new meaning at Milwaukee Irish Fest. Volunteers have donated over a decade and continue to educate all festival goers on environmental awareness messages at “Greenwish Village.” Volunteers also provide a behind the scenes waste reduction and recycling program. They have created the “Leprechaun Recycling Clan,” and promote a refill and recycling program of the Irish Fest and Vendor Souvenir Cups (no. 2 plastic). NAPCOR Green Recycling bins (recycled no.1 plastic) are located throughout the Henry W. Maier Festival Grounds. Hundreds of Plastic water and soda bottles were collected in these bins daily, totaling over 1,500 recycled by the end of one festival.

Waste Reduction Strategies and Results

- ◆ Thousands visited the Greenwish Village Environmental Awareness Exhibit that offers “hands-on” and “minds-on” educational games, displays and door prizes. The Be Smart message: “Think A Little About Waste Reduction. It Can Mean A Lot.” motivated festival goers to reduce waste both at the event and at home, school or work.
- ◆ Each of 200 food and retail vendors received a Festival Vendor Tip Sheet with a waste reduction message on one side, and on the other a sign reading, “This Vendor Is Reducing Waste.” If a vendor posted the sign, festival attendees knew they were buying responsibly as well. Repeat vendors stated that due to the volunteers’ efforts they have started buying in bulk, using reusable and weatherproof containers and asking rather than assuming their customers need bags, napkins or straws.
- ◆ Refills in Irish Fest Souvenir Cups were offered at a reduced price. Festival goers were encouraged through extensive signage to reuse or recycle their cups. Over 2000 souvenir cups were collected using blue City of Milwaukee Recycling Carts.
- ◆ Gate counts showed that 7% of the festival goers went home with souvenir cups. That’s over 8,000 cups!
- ◆ Cardboard, glass, metals, and plastics were collected behind the scenes from food and retail vendors and became part of the Milwaukee Summerfest crew’s recycling program.

The above efforts helped eliminate the amount of waste and litter produced despite the incredible increase in festival attendance. This annual effort is greatly appreciated by the festival volunteer clean up crew. For more information on how this festival is committed to staying “green” contact Milwaukee Irish Fest at 414-476-3378 or the Be Smart Information Hotline at 414-272-3334.

Information provided by the South East WI Waste Reduction Coalition.

Animal Waste



Some special events feature livestock which generate a large amount of waste — manure and animal bedding. This should be composted or spread on farm fields, not thrown away. Contact the local agricultural agent for a list of farmers, private markets, or compost sites to determine the best place to take animal waste. Also ask your hauler for suggestions. Make sure animal waste is stored far away from concession areas and in a location that reduces the risk of contaminating it with other trash. Work with animal exhibitors to ensure proper management.

Special Wastes

Any special wastes associated with your event, such as hydraulic fluid, motor oil, tires, batteries, fluorescent bulbs, and medical wastes (sharps) cannot be placed in the trash. Discuss management of these items with your hauler. Make sure everyone involved with your event clearly understands how they should handle these materials. Contact your regional DNR office for more advice.

Contracts

Most special events require contracts with haulers, concessionaires, owners of the event site, and others. Be certain that all of these contracts clearly define how trash **and** recyclables will be managed and who is responsible. Never assume that the waste contract automatically covers recycling too. Other things to consider:

- ✓ Check the permit from the municipality where you are holding your event. What does it say about recycling? What are the municipality’s recycling ordinances? What items must be recycled?
- ✓ Check with the owners of the event site or their maintenance people. What trash and recycling services do they provide? Do they have bins or barrels you can use for trash and recycling? Do you need to arrange for pickup when they become full? Whose staff will empty them? How much will it cost?
- ✓ Check your contracts with concessionaires and vendors. Do you clearly state how recycling will be done at your event and who is responsible? Is there a penalty for failure to comply? Are you requiring them to use specific items for serving the public? Are they required to train their employees how to recycle or refill reusables?

- ✓ Discuss the following issues with your hauler ahead of time and write them into your contract:
 - ◆ How many bins or barrels will be needed for trash and recycling and who will supply them? Where will they be located?
 - ◆ Who is responsible for emptying trash and recycling containers? How often and where will they be emptied?
 - ◆ Where will dumpsters (and animal waste sites) be located? How often will they be emptied? What time of day?
 - ◆ How will special wastes be managed?

Education

Education is the key to successfully managing recyclables and solid waste at your event. Haulers, concessionaires, visitors, volunteers, maintenance/grounds people, and the media — all need to be made aware of your program. Here are some tips:

- ◆ Keep your messages and directions simple.
- ◆ Appeal to peoples' concern for the environment and their civic pride to encourage participation.
- ◆ Clearly identify your trash and recycling containers — use distinct colors, put signs on top and on the sides of containers, use picturers as well as words.
- ◆ Enlist local groups or clubs to help promote and manage your program.
- ◆ Give a consistent recycling message throughout the event — use the same signs and colors at all sites and use recycled materials in your brochures, posters, cups, etc.
- ◆ If recycling cannot be done at every location where trash is collected, post a sign giving the location of the recycling stations.
- ◆ Remember recycling varies from community to community. Be sure that everyone knows what you are recycling at your location. Don't assume anything.

Program Evaluation

After your event is over, discuss recycling and waste management with your staff, concessionaires, vendors, property owners, and haulers. What worked? What didn't? How can you improve the program for next year? How can you make it easier for everyone to participate?

Thank You

Thank you for considering waste reduction and recycling. Your efforts, no matter how big or small, show others your concern for the environment. Remember, every time you reduce, reuse, or recycle you are doing a good thing for yourself as well as for others!

For more assistance in your area look up "Waste Reduction and Recycling Information, People to Contact in Wisconsin" on the DNR web site at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/contacts/recycle.htm> or contact your area DNR staff at the following locations:

	Eau Claire	715/839-3700
	Green Bay	920/492-5926
	Madison	608/275-3266
	Milwaukee	414/263-8500
	Rhineland	715/365-8900
	Spoooner	715/635-2101
	Wausau	715/359-4522

Making recycling noticeable for the public also gives you the opportunity for some good public relations. Posters, banners, stickers, cups — all could promote recycling along with your event and sponsors. Let the media know about your "green event" — they may do a special report or story!

Contact your regional DNR office for more information on promoting recycling and waste reduction.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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