

# A Restaurant & Bar Manager's Guide to Recycling



## Introduction

*This training guide is a continuation of your current recycling program on how to maintain employee enthusiasm and promote success.*

**Single stream or mixed recycling** is usually more effective than sorting recyclables by material

because the reduced choices make it easier for customers and employees. Check with your hauler about the materials they accept. Emphasize to employees the value of recycling coupled with the materials your hauler approves. There are many different haulers in Lincoln and each one collects a variety of different materials.

Good labeling and signage will ensure that materials are properly sorted. Use the standard colors for easy identification: blue labels for recycling, green for compost, and black for trash. Labels are most effective if they include pictures of the acceptable materials.

When people put trash or recycling in the wrong bin it can be detrimental to how the recycling is processed and may result in the entire bin being discarded into a landfill. This is especially true when food waste is mixed with paper or cardboard recyclables. Contamination is also possible if plastic, glass, or metal containers aren't properly rinsed.

### Set up for success checklist:

- Create a shared hauling system for waste and recycling with other nearby businesses. This may help save money and encourage neighboring businesses to also recycling.
- Conduct frequent and detailed inventories of products to minimize food waste.
- Use reusable dishware and silverware to reduce waste.
- Post a chart of recyclable versus non-recyclable materials on any staff notification boards.
- Post weekly bulletins or send out weekly emails with helpful tips about reducing contamination and other green practices.
- Continue to identify areas that need improvement.

• **Labeling & Signage** *Properly identifying containers and the materials that belong in them is the most effective way to ensure employees and patrons participate in a recycling program.*



*About 20 percent of recyclables still end up in landfills due to **contamination***

*- The Telegraph*



- Properly label all containers, including in the front of house, the back of house, and outside.
- Place signage at eye-level.
- Place recycling bins of similar size or larger next to all trash bins. This maximizes recycling output while minimizing contamination.
- Use lids built to receive the desired materials. For example, a hole in the lid would suggest it should be used for bottles and cans whereas a slot would be used for paper.
- Use color coded bags or containers to help train employees.



## Things employees need to know:

Employees serve an essential function in any waste reduction program. They often are the deciding factor in where a material is placed and whether it is properly rinsed. Utilize WasteCap Nebraska’s in-person training and/or recycling pamphlets to increase employees’ knowledge about recycling and other green practices. Incorporate recycling into new employee training programs.

- Explain and list the materials your hauler picks up and which containers they should go into.
- Plastic, glass, and metal recyclables need to be clean and empty so there is no food residue.
- Some haulers require glass to be sorted separately.
- Recycle clean pizza boxes and cardboard. Grease is okay, food residue is not.
- Cardboard must be broken down and flattened. This is important for processing cardboard and to maximize space in a tote or dumpster.



## Recycling is easy!

- The best way to develop a successful recycling program is to help customers and employees understand the types of materials that can be recycled and where to put them through proper labeling.
- Remind employees that recycling is a team effort. If even a few people aren’t participating, potential recyclables may end up in a landfill as a consequence of contamination.

*Need help  
with training?  
Contact  
WasteCap  
Nebraska for  
employee  
and green  
team training  
services.*

- A small group of “recycling champions” could be appointed to a “green team” that serves as a catalyst for change by making recommendations for the workplace and by training other employees.

## Take the next step: Composting



The best use of unused food is a food-to-people or a food-to-animals program. For food scrap generated in the kitchen or from plate waste, composting allows for food and other organic waste to be disposed of

sustainably. Unused food and soiled paper products are processed to provide beneficial organic matter and nutrients to soils, enabling farmers and gardeners to grow food and other plants more efficiently. To avoid unpleasant smells, most restaurants and businesses place their organic waste in specially made compostable bags. Lincoln has two service providers for composting: Big Red Worms and Prairieland Dairy.

## The Project

The development of these recycling training materials was funded by a Waste Reduction and Recycling grant awarded to WasteCap Nebraska by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. The grant was implemented by WasteCap Nebraska, the City of Lincoln recycling coordinator, and the Downtown Lincoln Association.

## More Resources

- WasteCap Nebraska; [wastecapne.org](http://wastecapne.org)
- ConServe - National Restaurant Association; [conserve.restaurant.org](http://conserve.restaurant.org)
- Green Restaurant Association; [dinegreen.com](http://dinegreen.com)

*WasteCap Nebraska is merging with Nebraska State Recycling Association and will become Nebraska Recycling Council effective April 1, 2017.*

### Local Composting Resources

#### **Big Red Worms**

**402-476-9340**

[bigredworms.com](http://bigredworms.com)

#### **Prairieland Dairy**

**402-791-2228**

[prairielanddairy.com](http://prairielanddairy.com)



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