

ZERO WASTE EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

REDUCE

REUSE

RECYCLE

ROT

Marin Sanitary Service

CONSERVATION – OUR EARTH, OUR MISSION, OUR JOB



Make Your Special Event or Venue a “Zero Waste” Event

Waste reduction is easy with proper planning. Let Marin Sanitary help you plan a waste free event allowing your organization to maximize diversion, potentially save money, all while decreasing your carbon footprint.

What is the definition of a Special Event?

According to CalRecycle, a Special Event is a community, public, commercial, recreational or social event which *may* serve food or drink and which *may* require a permit from the Agency. Special Events may include the temporary or periodic use of a public street, publicly owned site or facility, or a public park. Examples of events include fairs, farmer's markets, concerts, outdoor movie events, sporting events, trade shows, community BBQs, school activities, or public speaking events.

Current law enacted by AB 2176 (Public Resources Code Section 42648 www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Venues) addresses recycling at large venues and large events. AB 2176 defines large venues as permanent facilities such as stadiums, amphitheaters, arenas and racetracks that serve an average of 2,000 or more persons a day. Large (or Special) Events are defined as those that serve more than 2,000 persons per day and charge admission, such as a sporting event or flea market.

At MSS, we realize that all events *regardless* of size have the potential to generate significant waste. As part of the effort to promote Zero Waste in the County of Marin, we have developed the following guide to help you implement recycling, reuse and composting practices so you can have a Zero-Waste event.

How large does my event have to be before I am required by law to recycle?

If you think you will generate ≥ 4 cubic yards of solid waste at your event, you are required to recycle under the mandatory recycling law. However, the only way we will reach Zero Waste is if everyone contributes and does their part to keep valuable resources out of the trash *regardless* of the size of the event.

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL ZERO WASTE EVENT PLANNING

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

(This could be one person or several vendors, organizations, and individuals)

Get everyone involved. Vendors will create the majority of waste, which makes them a major stakeholder in your event. As the organizer, you can be in control of the products that are used at your event.

- Advise vendors of recyclable and compostable packaging.
- Encourage waste minimization (Does the vendor need to hand out straws that aren't really needed?)

FOOD SERVICE

The majority of the waste found at large events is organic and can be composted. It is essential that food service providers are aware of the Zero Waste goals of your event.

- Donate excess food to local shelters, food banks, or soup kitchens;
- Rent equipment like tablecloths or utensils instead of using one-time use items;
- Serve food buffet style rather than in “box lunch” form or use finger foods, limiting the number of plates required;
- If reusable items are not available, use compostable plates and cutlery that can be composted.
- Provide drinks and condiments (water, tea, sugars, ketchup, salad dressings, etc.) in bulk instead of in individual packages and servings or use canned drinks as an alternative;
- Ban polystyrene containers from the event. They cannot be recycled and are banned in some locations in Marin County.

SITE PLANNING and SORTING STATION PLACEMENT

A site map will allow you to visually consider appropriate locations to place your composting/recycling stations. Make sure all involved have the map and that it is even accessible to the public if the event is really large.

Strategic placement of sorting stations and clear signage is vital to the success of your resource collection plan.

The GOLDEN RULE of Zero Waste Events: ***Leave no garbage can standing alone.*** Where there is a trash container, there should be a recycling container and if necessary, a compost container.

Sorting Station Placement

- Keep all types of containers clustered together, in the same order and color coded for easy identification and use.
- Make sure the containers are:
 - ▶ Accessible and conveniently located
 - ▶ Located near food and eating areas
 - ▶ Near entrances and exit points
 - ▶ Close to crowded areas
 - ▶ Ensure they are accessible by all

Signage

Plenty of signage is essential for successful recycling. Your signs may incorporate simple wording or even images of the different materials that can be placed in the recycling or composting containers.

- Make sure signs are CLEAR. Pictures work well. Too many words and people stop reading.
- Ensure signs are attached to each container:
 - ▶ Composting to green cart
 - ▶ Mixed Recycling to brown cart
 - ▶ Paper Recycling to blue cart
 - ▶ Landfill to gray cart
- Place signs at eye level to catch attention and on the containers for reminders.

DECORATIONS & GIVE-A-WAYS

Consider the environmental impact of any raffled prizes, give-a-ways, centerpieces, or decorations to be used at the event. Minimize the packaging for these items.

- Limit the number of give-a-ways.
- Make sure all items purchased are reusable, recyclable or compostable.
- Instead of pre-filled goodie bags, allow participants to select only the items they actually want. This will avoid unwanted items finding their way to the trash bin.
- Distribute items to attendees that will help them to reduce waste (e.g. cloth bags, reusable bottles, native plant seeds, potted plants, etc).

EDUCATE EQUIP and EMPOWER!

Education is a crucial part of a Zero Waste Event. People need to be taught, given the tools, and empowered to do the right thing. It is also good marketing and can be a promotional tool for the event.

EVERYONE at the event needs to know what is recyclable and compostable and where to place these items. The more ways you communicate this, the more successful you will be in reducing waste. Think REDUCE < REUSE < RECYCLE as you go through the list. Below are some suggestions:

- Posters & Signs
- Flags
- Man stations with volunteers
- T-shirts for staff with the recycling logo in addition to your logo

- Press and Media Releases
- Information on tickets and invitations on Zero Waste
- Stamp patrons hands on entry with a recycling logo to keep the goal fresh in their minds
- Regular PA announcements made to remind patrons of the Zero Waste goal.

VOLUNTEERS

If possible, enlist volunteers to be “sorting attendants” to educate event participants to place resources in the correct containers. Sorting Attendants may be event planning staff or volunteers or non-profit or student volunteers.

It is also a great initiative to involve the community and promote local groups. Your team of volunteers could include:

- Local students
- Sports teams
- Local businesses
- Community groups and volunteers

By recruiting and training as many volunteers as possible, you will have a “Zero Waste Management Team” available to assign to various tasks.

Volunteers stationed by your recycling containers can supervise what goes into the bins and will also help to increase public awareness. This will help reduce contamination and increase the amount of waste that is recycled overall.

ZERO WASTE MANAGEMENT TEAM TRAINING

Emphasize the “training” aspect of learning by doing. Event participants should do the sorting themselves and the Sorting Attendants should verbally direct them when they need some help.

Comments or questions that may engage the participants may include:

- Do you know where this trash goes when it leaves this event?”
- “Do you know where to sort your waste?”
- “Do you have any questions about this zero waste station?”
- “Our goal is to keep valuable resources out of the landfill.”
- “We will compost or recycle all these products.”
- “If you can avoid single use food containers, cups and bags and instead use reusable mugs, containers and bags, you will save valuable resources and prevent unnecessary waste in the landfills.”

Suggested Timeline for Special Event Planning > 500 people

(this can be modified for smaller groups):

One Year to Six months prior to event

- Identify recycling and “greening” goals for your event
 - Determine the materials in the event waste stream
 - Work with MSS to develop a service plan for collection
 - Determine where and who generates the most waste (suppliers, staff, vendors, attendees, etc.)
 - Determine items to recycle and compost
 - Research procurement opportunities (buying durable, reusable, and repairable products)
 - Research the best equipment/containers for collection
 - Identify education/outreach opportunities
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Six to Three months prior to event

- Purchase recycled and recyclable products, or require vendors to purchase recycled and recyclable items
 - Determine which items are recyclable, compostable, or reusable
 - Decide which materials will be source separated vs. co-mingled
 - Meet with vendors to discuss recycling and waste reduction opportunities
 - Determine ways to reduce packaging
 - Select and order equipment (bins, stickers, etc.)
 - Research donation opportunities
 - Identify staff person to assist in implementing recycling procedures
 - Organize education and outreach components (i.e. information in event program and vendor packets, press release, signage, etc.)
 - Work with local non-profits who will assist with collection of recyclables
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Two to Three months prior to event

- Publicize event greening through displays, media, and promotions
- Inform media of event greening program
- Order recycling/waste services
- Determine who will be collecting and transporting recyclables on the event day
- Include recycling procedures in vendor packet
- Confirm equipment & outreach orders and drop off schedule
- Train staff on recycling procedures
- Create diagram of recycling staging area for vendors

Week prior to event

- Confirm donation pick-up
- Confirm equipment and outreach delivery
- Confirm hauler/recycler schedule
- Create signage for recycling bins if not provided by hauler

Day before event

- Train staff (can be done day of event)
- Distribute recycling procedures to vendors
- Strategically place trash and recycling bins and composting bins next to each other

Day of Event

- Monitor waste and recycling stations regularly
- Empty containers as needed
- Publicize recycling throughout day with announcements

After Event

- Ensure containers are picked up on time
- Collect weight tickets and receipts from haulers
- Review what procedures did and did not work
- Evaluate results
- Write-up recommendations for next event
- Publicize results of your Zero Waste Event
- CELEBRATE your success!