



How to Conduct a Waste Assessment

The purpose of a waste assessment is to evaluate what is entering your business and analyzing how (and where) it is being disposed. This information will help you to develop cost-effective recommendations for program improvements.

Getting Ready for your Assessment:

1. Do your **research**.
 - a. Know all the services you have at your business—plastic/glass/metal can recycling, cardboard and paper recycling, garbage. This information can be provided to you by Marin Sanitary Service, but should be verified on site.
 - i. Find out the size and number of all dumpsters (garbage/cardboard) and how often they are picked up.
 - ii. Find out the size and number of all carts for recycling (blue for paper and brown for other mixed plastic, metals, glass recycling).
 - iii. Find out which days these containers are picked up and where they are placed for pick-up (curbside, locked area, other designated area).
2. **Schedule** your Assessment. This is done over one consecutive week.
 - a. Pick a person to perform the assessment using the attached worksheet.
 - b. Assess the carts and dumpsters on their pick-up days late in the afternoon on the *day before* they are picked up. Usually around close of business is best because this is when the custodial staff is coming in. If you can only do the assessment earlier in the day, then ask the evening custodian to estimate how much more is added to the dumpster(s) and recycling carts (blue and brown).
 - i. For example, if your dumpster is picked up on Tuesday and Friday, you will need to check the dumpster on Monday and Thursday late afternoon.
 - ii. For example, if your recycling is picked up on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, you will need to check the carts on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. The cart on Monday will most likely be put out very early Monday morning. Someone could look at the contents on Friday late afternoon.
3. **The Waste Assessment**
 - a. On the afternoon before pick-up, go to where the dumpster and/or carts are picked up.
 - b. Record on the worksheet, the percentage that each was full. Remember to only estimate the waste/recycling from the carts that are placed at the curbside or in the dumpster (s).
 - i. For example, the walls of the dumpsters are divided into segments (thick lines). If there are four lines in the dumpster and the garbage only goes up to the first (bottom) segment, the dumpster is only 25% full.
 - c. Note the types and estimate the amounts of recycling that is in the garbage dumpsters and the garbage that is in the recycling carts and record this on the worksheet.
 - i. For example, a lot of cardboard boxes in the dumpster, many types of plastics in the dumpster, a few milk cartons in the recycling.
 - ii. If you can, take pictures to help show the amounts. These can be attached to the worksheet.