

# Green Event Toolkit



# Introduction

Countless events are hosted throughout Washington County every year. From graduation parties to citywide celebrations, events can generate a lot of trash! The Green Event Toolkit includes useful tips on what's recyclable and compostable, how to set up a green event, and who to contact for various service needs. Use this toolkit as a road map to plan your next green event!

For more information, email Washington County Public Health & Environment at [PHE@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:PHE@co.washington.mn.us) or call 651-430-6655.

## Table of Contents

Recycling and Organics Best Practices .....	p. 1
Green Events Checklist .....	p. 2-4
Haulers and Drop-off Sites .....	p. 5
Plastic Bags and Wrap .....	p. 6
Food Donation .....	p. 6
Compostable Products .....	p. 7-8
Green Event Resources .....	p. 9



### Washington County Disposal Directory

Quickly find local disposal and recycling options for items you no longer want or need by searching the Washington County Disposal Directory. Easy to use and mobile friendly, the Disposal Directory is your go-to resource for disposal information in Washington County.

**Search the Washington County Disposal Directory today!**  
[recyclesearch.com/wcdd](http://recyclesearch.com/wcdd)



Sign up to receive email updates on environmental services and events by visiting [www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us). Click on "Notify Me" and subscribe to the Environmental eUpdate.



# Best Practices: Recycling and Organics

**Recycling 101** Waste haulers may accept additional materials for recycling. Contact them for more information.



## Glass

### Bottles & Jars

- Empty and rinse
- Remove caps and place in trash



## Metal

### Food & Beverage Cans

- Empty and rinse
- Do not crush



## Plastic

### Bottles & Containers

- Empty and rinse
- Do not flatten
- Can leave caps on



## Cartons

- Empty and rinse
- Do not flatten
- Can leave caps on



## Paper & Cardboard

- Cardboard boxes; magazines, mail, and newspapers; office, school and scrap papers; paper towel and toilet paper tubes
- Flatten and keep dry

**Do Not Bag Recyclables**

**No Plastic Bags or Wrap**

**No Tangles**  
(No hoses, wires, or string lights)

**No Shredded Paper**

Some of these items can still be recycled, but only at participating drop-off locations such as the **Environmental Center**.

## Organics 101

More than one-third of our trash is organic material that can be recycled into compost. Recycling organics, such as food scraps and paper towels, is an easy way to reduce your trash and make a difference!



### Food

- Fruit and vegetables
- Meat, fish, and bones
- Dairy products
- Eggs and egg shells
- Bread, pasta, beans, and rice
- Nuts and shells
- Coffee grounds, filters, and tea bags

### Non-recyclable paper

- Paper towels
- Napkins and tissues
- Pizza delivery boxes



### Certified compostable products

- Certified compostable paper and plastic cups, plates, bowls, utensils, and containers
- Look for the BPI logo when purchasing compostable products.



### Not Accepted:

- Yard waste
- Animal/pet waste, litter, or bedding
- Dead animals
- Diapers
- Cleaning or baby wipes
- Dryer lint and dryer sheets
- Recyclable items (cartons, glass, metal, paper, plastic)
- Rubber
- Frozen food boxes
- Styrofoam™
- Wood



# Green Event Checklist

With all the food, packaging, decorations, and giveaways, events of any size can generate a lot of waste. But with a little bit of planning, you can make your event low- or no-waste. The following checklist will help green your efforts before, during, and after your event.

Washington County Public Health & Environment can also help event coordinators develop waste reduction plans, educate vendors, train volunteers, and find collection options. Email [PHE@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:PHE@co.washington.mn.us) or call 651-430-6655 for more information.

## Before the event

### Planning

- [ ] Select a person or committee to coordinate and implement the waste reduction efforts.
- [ ] Evaluate all materials that will be at the event (packaging, giveaways, decorations, banners) and try to eliminate as many disposable materials as possible.
- [ ] Assess the waste that will be generated to identify recycling and/or composting opportunities. If food waste makes up a significant portion of the waste generated, consider collecting food waste for composting.
- [ ] Serve items with little or no packaging, or use reusable, compostable, or recyclable food serviceware and confirm with vendors that they will as well. Provide matching disposal method for the serviceware provided.
- [ ] Avoid use of single-serving beverages or bottled water. Instead, use large beverage with large beverage dispensers or jugs and filling compostable or reusable cups.
- [ ] Use decorations that can be reused for future events, including linens, centerpieces and decorations. Consider borrowing items from a friend that has thrown a similar event. Consider using alternatives to balloons, such as fresh-cut flowers from your garden, or look for biodegradable balloons.
- [ ] Plan to collect plastic bags separately from single stream recycling. Deliver plastic bags to a participating drop-off location. (See page 6.)
- [ ] If you are making your own food, consider using local food, such as from a farmers market or your own backyard garden. Many local farmers can provide local food items in the wintertime. If food for your event is being catered, talk to your catering company about how they can incorporate local food into the menu.
- [ ] Provide condiments in bulk instead of individually wrapped servings. For example, provide a sugar bowl instead of individually wrapped packets.

### Communication and education

- [ ] Inform vendors of waste-diversion efforts as early as possible to ensure they have adequate time to prepare for the event.
- [ ] Inform the public about your waste-diversion efforts in social media, news releases, event programs, promotions, and advertising and registration materials.

## Before the event (continued)

### Communication and education (continued)

- [ ] Provide information on bike and transit routes to your event, or encourage your guests to carpool when possible. Consider offering to shuttle guests from transit stops to your event.
- [ ] Consider distributing invitations electronically to reduce paper waste. If you prefer paper invitations, purchase invitations made from a minimum of 30% post-consumer content recycled paper.

### Waste stations

- [ ] Plan to place recycling, composting, and trash receptacles together to form a waste station. This will help ensure that materials end up in the correct container.
- [ ] Determine the number of waste stations needed. One waste station can serve between 200-300 people.
- [ ] Make sure you have recycling, composting, and trash containers prior to the event. Washington County offers free, portable recycling containers for small, single day events. [www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us) (search “recycling container loan”)
- [ ] Make sure waste stations are placed in a convenient location. Place larger stations in areas where high volumes of waste are generated. Meet with maintenance staff to determine exact locations of waste stations.
- [ ] Label all containers with large, clear and specific signs. If possible, include pictures or post examples of what goes in each container. Be sure signs on the waste containers are visible. Also consider having banners, signs or flags to help attendees find the waste stations.

### Volunteers

- [ ] Recruit volunteers to be waste monitors. Consider using schools, scout groups, churches or businesses.
- [ ] Create a volunteer schedule and plan for one volunteer per waste station. You may need to plan more than one shift if the event lasts more than three hours.
- [ ] Gather waste monitor supplies for volunteers, including:
  - Plastic gloves
  - Waste pickers
  - Hand sanitizer
  - Event waste information
  - Buttons, t-shirt, etc.
  - Extra compost bags
  - Scale to weigh waste and report results
- [ ] Email Washington County Public Health & Environment at [PHE@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:PHE@co.washington.mn.us) or call 651-430-6655 to learn about additional resources.

## At the event

- [ ] Greet each vendor and exhibitor during set-up and provide clear instructions for recycling their materials, such as flattening cardboard boxes for recycling, bagging plastic bags for specialized collection, etc.
- [ ] Keep waste stations staffed at all times to help event participants place their waste in the correct container. If this is not possible, assign someone to check the area periodically.
- [ ] Provide a break for volunteers during their shift, if possible.
- [ ] Empty bins often, especially during the summer when odors and/or insects can discourage recycling.

## After the event

- [ ] Weigh the recycling, organics and trash separately. Calculate your diversion rate by using the following formula:  
$$\frac{\text{amount recycled} + \text{amount composted}}{\text{total waste or, recycling} + \text{organics} + \text{trash}}$$
- [ ] If it is not possible or practical to weigh each waste stream, weigh only the trash.
- [ ] Share your green event success with your sponsors, vendors, participants and volunteers.

# Hauler and Drop-off Sites

Two communities in Washington County include event recycling as part of their municipal waste and recycling contracts. If your event is located in these cities, please contact them directly.

- **Forest Lake:** Don Udem, 651-209-9720
- **Stillwater:** Beth Wolf, 651-430-8800

If service is not provided by the city or township, event organizers can hire a hauler or self-haul recyclables to one of the drop-off sites. Visit [directory.bizrecycling.com](http://directory.bizrecycling.com) for a list of drop-off sites in the Twin Cities metro area.

## When looking for a potential hauler, here's a list of questions to ask:

- What materials will the hauler collect?
- What will the services cost?
- Will the hauler donate any portion of the service?
- What is the hauler's experience with event recycling?
- Can the hauler provide the collection containers?
- Will the hauler provide signage and container labeling?
- Where will the organics be taken for composting?
- Will recyclables be collected together or do they need to be separated?
- How are contaminated loads handled? Is there a fee for contaminated loads?
- Is the hauler able to measure and report garbage and recycling data?

	Trash	Recycling	Organics
Ace Solid Waste, Inc. • 763-427-3110	✓	✓	✓
ADS Vasko Solid Waste, Inc. • 651-768-5273	✓	✓	✓
Aspen Waste Systems, Inc. • 612-884-8000	✓	✓	✓
Buckingham Disposal • 952-226-6441	✓	✓	
Dick's Sanitation Service, Inc. • 952-469-2239	✓	✓	✓
Gene's Disposal Service, Inc. • 612-414-4921	✓	✓	✓
Lakeville Sanitation, Inc. • 952-469-9817	✓	✓	✓
LePage & Sons, Inc. • 763-757-7100	✓		
Maroney's Sanitation, Inc. • 651-955-7219	✓	✓	
Nitti Sanitation, Inc • 651-457-4434	✓	✓	
Randy's Environmental Services • 763-972-3335	✓	✓	
Republic Services • 651-286-4580	✓	✓	✓
Republic Services/Allied Waste • 763-259-5566	✓	✓	
SRC, Incorporated dba Forest Lake Sanitation • 651-464-2321	✓	✓	
Tennis Brothers Sanitation, LLC • 651-459-1887	✓	✓	
Tennis Sanitation, LLC • 763-427-3110	✓	✓	
Walters Recycling & Refuse, Inc • 763-780-8464	✓	✓	✓
Waste Management of Minnesota, Inc. - Blaine • 763-783-5471	✓	✓	✓
Waste Management - Burnsville • 952-882-2356	✓	✓	✓

# Plastic Bags & Wrap

Events can generate a lot of plastic bags and wrap. Plastic bags and wrap are NOT accepted in curbside recycling because they can cause major issue at recycling facilities.

Clean and dry plastic bags and wrap can be brought to a designated drop-off location for recycling. Materials accepted include:

- Grocery bags
- Produce bags
- Newspaper bags
- Bread bags
- Dry cleaning bags
- Food storage bags
- Cereal box liners
- Case wrap
- Napkin, paper towel, bathroom tissue, and diaper wrap packaging
- Deflated air pillows
- Any packaging with a How2Recycle label



## Drop-off Locations

- Washington County Environmental Center  
[www.co.washington.mn.us/envirocenter](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/envirocenter)
- Retailers including Target, Cub, and Walmart.  
Find a location near you: [plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://plasticfilmrecycling.org).

## Preparation

- Bags and film must be clean and dry
- No excessive stickers or added labeling
- No strings, zippers, or rigid closing mechanisms
- Must be collected separately from other recycles and brought to a designated drop-off site.

# Food Donation

Donating food helps those in need, including many children and seniors. It also helps the environment as food waste is a huge part of the waste stream. When food is wasted, the water, energy, fertilizer, and cropland that went into producing the food is wasted, too. Please consider donating any food that has not been served.

Your donations are protected by the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Act which protects organizations that donate

food to a nonprofit for distribution to needy individuals are not subject to civil or criminal liability that arises from the condition of the food.

You're also able to save money on your Federal taxes. Eligible businesses can deduct the lesser of either (a) twice the cost of acquiring the donated food or (b) the cost of acquiring the donated food, plus one-half of the food's expected profit margin, if it were sold at its fair market value.

## Drop-off Locations

**St. Paul Park**  
**Oakdale**  
**Stillwater**  
**Hugo**  
**Forest Lake**  
**North St. Paul**

Friends in Need Food Shelf • 651-458-0730  
Christian Cupboard Emergency Food Shelf • 651-233-1296  
Valley Outreach • 651-430-2739  
Hugo Good Neighbors Food Shelf • 651-528-6224  
Family Pathways Food Pantry • 651-464-2098  
Second Harvest Heartland • 651-484-5117

# Compostable Products

As part of your organics recycling program, you may be interested in using disposable foodservice ware that is compostable and collecting organic waste in compostable plastic bags. If you are using these items, you will want to make sure that the materials are certified as compostable.

## Certification for Compostable Plastics

### Look for the Logo

The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) is the North American certifying body for compostable plastics. Look for items that are BPI certified. You can also check to see whether a product meets the BPI standards for compostability at [www.bpiworld.org](http://www.bpiworld.org).



### Ask Questions

When purchasing products, be sure to ask if what you are buying is certified compostable. Don't be fooled by products marketed as "degradable", "biodegradable", or "made from plants". Also, some companies that offer BPI certified products may also offer non-compostable products that look similar. Be sure to check to ensure you are buying what you intend to buy!

## Compostable Product Vendors

Vendor	Contact Info	Products Available
Advance Sales <a href="http://www.advance-sales.net">www.advance-sales.net</a>	Eric Jensen / Dan Gerhard 763-425-2236 <a href="mailto:ejensen@advance-sales.net">ejensen@advance-sales.net</a> <a href="mailto:dangerhard@advance-sales.net">dangerhard@advance-sales.net</a>	Compostable bags, cups, lids, containers  Fiber and Paper bowls, plates, cups and containers
Aset Supply and Paper <a href="http://www.asetupplyandpaper.com">www.asetupplyandpaper.com</a>	Bob Taubman/Jae Johnson 763-432-7263 <a href="mailto:btaubman@asetupplyandpaper.com">btaubman@asetupplyandpaper.com</a> <a href="mailto:JaeJohnson@asetupplyandpaper.com">JaeJohnson@asetupplyandpaper.com</a>	Compostable bags, clamshells, trays, bowls, containers, hot and cold cups and lids, portion cups, and cutlery
Cole <a href="http://www.colepapers.com">www.colepapers.com</a>	Maria McCarthy 612-250-1455 <a href="mailto:mmccarthy@colepapers.com">mmccarthy@colepapers.com</a>	Compostable clamshells, trays, bowls, containers, hot and cold cups and lids, portion cups, and cutlery  Fiber plates, bowls, cups, lids and containers

## Compostable Product Vendors (continued)

Vendor	Contact Info	Products Available
Cortec Corporation www.cortecvci.com	Jay Zhang 651-429-1100 ext. 1150 jzhang@cortecvci.com	Compostable bags
Johnson Paper www.johnsonpaper.net	Dean Forbord 612-230-3682	Compostable plates, boats, hot and cold cups, lids and cutlery
LitinEco www.litineco.com	Simon Hefty 612-607-5704 / 651-329-8935 (c) shefty@litin.com	Compostable bags, cups, containers, plates, bowls, straws, utensils, straws
Northern Technologies www.ntic.com	Lisa Ruedy 763-225-6611 lruedy@ntic.com	Compostable bags and cutlery
Plastic Bagmart www.pbmartmn.com	Mark Greenstein 763-544-3892 mark.pbmart@qwestoffice.net	Compostable bags
Organix Solutions www.organixsolutions.com	Emilee Metcalf 763-972-4120 emilee.metcalf@organixsolutions.com	Compostable bags
Renewables www.renewablesbrand.com	Jason Whelan 763-221-9569 jason.whelan@renewablesbrand.com	Compostable cups, sporks
SelfEco www.selfeco.com	Danny Mishek 651-342-5195 danny@selfeco.com	Compostable Catering-ware, drinkware, plates, bowls, food cups, cutlery
Sysco MN www.sysco.com/home.html	Dee Ann Bischel 763-785-7544 bischel.dee	Compostable bags, cups, lids, bowls, straws and containers
Up Coffee Roasters www.upcoffeeroasters.com	Kevin Selig 612-728-7208 kevin@upcoffeeroasters.com	Compostable bags, clamshells, bowls, cups
Van Paper Company	Scott Van (651)690-1751 sales@vanpaper.com	Compostable plates, boats, hot and cold cups and lids, straws

# Green Event Resources

## Event Right Sizing

Use this worksheet to determine what services you need for your event.

- **Event right-sizing worksheet** (PDF)
- **Event right-sizing worksheet** (Excel)

## Communicating to Vendors

Download and customize these letters to communicate your waste reduction goals and recycling guidelines to vendors.

- **Sample vendor letter** (recycling only)
- **Sample vendor letter** (recycling and food waste)
- **Sample letter for presenters**

## Recycling Container Loan



Portable recycling containers are available for you to borrow for collecting bottles and cans at small, single-day gatherings such as graduation parties, family reunions, block parties, and similar events. Bags are included.

Full bags of recyclables may be placed with regular recycling pickup (remove and discard plastic bag) or be brought to the **Environmental Center** during business hours.

To reserve a container, go to [www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us) and search “recycling container loan.” Fill out and submit the online reservation form. Pick-up locations include the Washington County Government Center in Stillwater and Environmental Center in Woodbury.

## Questions?

Washington County Public Health & Environment can help event coordinators develop waste reduction plans, educate vendors, train volunteers, and find collection options. For more information, email [PHE@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:PHE@co.washington.mn.us) or call 651-430-6655.