

Conducting A Waste Audit

What Is a Waste Audit?

A Waste Management Tool

A waste audit provides you with an idea of where your school is NOW in waste management practices. By looking at a sample of waste, the overall waste composition of your operation can be estimated. The waste audit will tell you not only the type, quantity, or origin of waste produced, but also the management policies and procedures that affect waste generation in your school.

Identifies Reduction Opportunities

A waste audit helps to identify wasteful practices and create potential opportunities to increase efficiency, reduce waste, and lower costs.

An Educational Tool

By participating in a waste audit, students can learn about waste generation and its impacts. Ideally, students should be given the opportunity to "brainstorm" on how to reduce waste identified in the waste audit.

Conducting a Waste Audit in Your School

Step 1: History Lesson

Get an idea of the current waste generated at your school. Review the school's waste record for the past 12 months to determine.

- how much waste was produced
- how often the waste is collected
- what happens to the waste after it leaves the school
- what has been done so far to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste

Step 2: Take a Look Around

The audit will look at the type and amount of waste generated in each area of the school. A building tour will tell you where your school's waste is produced and some of the reasons why. The tour may identify.

- places that generate a lot, a little, and average amounts of waste
- places of recycling activity
- custodial routines

Step 3: Making Plans

Based on the information gained in the building tour, the structure of the audit can be determined. The amount of waste and the period of time over which it has collected has a drastic effect on the accuracy of the audit findings. No two weeks of an operation are exactly alike. It is important to select an audit sample which captures as many functions as possible. Audit design and preparation will include:

- where the waste is produced and where it will be sampled
- how much waste will be generated
- how much waste will be sampled
- when the sampling will occur
- who will conduct the audit
- what equipment and space will be needed

Step 4: Getting Down and Dirty

During the "hands on" stage of the audit, waste is sorted by hand to determine its composition. It is very important to carefully label all materials at this point to determine their source. This is also an excellent time to collect additional information about common contaminants or specific packaging which can be reduced. In this hands-on stage you will:

- gather all waste and recyclables designed for weighing
- label and weight all bags
- hand-sort materials and place them into individual waste-stream categories
- note contaminants in recyclable stream (ie. paper in the metal can recycling bin and vice versa)
- record findings and any observations

Step 5: What Does It All Mean?

After the raw data is compiled, you can determine:

- how much waste is generated per year
- the waste composition
- how much material is diverted through 3Rs activities
- how and why the waste is generated

Where to Now?

The waste audit provides you with a valuable tool to get to work reducing waste at your school. Look at your results and see which areas need the most work. How can your school's handling and sorting practices be improved? What new waste reduction programs are necessary? Is additional education for staff and

students necessary to reduce waste? How can the students continue to be involved? Ask students for their suggestions on how to reduce waste? How can the students continue to be involved? Ask students for their suggestions on how to reduce waste around the school and encourage them to participate.