

CURBSIDE RECYCLING PROGRAMS HELPFUL IDEAS FOR IMPROVING PARTICIPATION

1. Recycling is most apt to be successful if the method of collecting recyclables mirrors the method of trash collection. If trash is collected weekly, collect recyclables weekly and on the same day as the trash collection. Every other week collection of recyclables generally confuses residents resulting in a very low participation rate.
2. Limit trash collection to one time a week. Once a week trash collection will greatly increase participation in the recycling program because residents will want to divert materials to the recycling container in order to save space in their trash cans/bags.
3. Participation in a curbside recycling program will be better if the community provides residents with set-out containers for recyclable materials rather than relying on the residents to provide their own. Color coded bags are also an option for residents to use for storage and handling of their recyclables. These should be provided to the residents by the community in lieu of a set-out container. Whatever type of container is chosen, it should meet the needs of the residents, but should also be easy for personnel collecting the material at the curb.
4. Public education is the key to a successful program. To get the information out about the recycling program, use radio and tv spots, newspaper ads and articles, and billboard ads; visit and give presentations to neighborhood associations, schools, churches and civic organizations to promote and explain the program; put quarterly flyers, leaflets and/or newsletters in the water/sewer bill, bank statement or by separate mailing by the water/sewer department; train community volunteers on program so they educate neighbors and others; produce video on local waste management/recycling program and provide video free to video stores; and setup a display information booth on weekends at the local malls, discount stores and/or food centers. Whatever the means of getting the information out, ensure that the material explains 1) what is being collected, 2) preparation instructions, 3) time and day when the materials will be collected, and 4) who to contact if you have questions. Simple, active language and simple line graphics in the printed material is very important. Continuous education is critical if the recycling program is to be successful. Education of the residents should begin 3 months before the recycling program begins and continue quarterly. Contact MDEQ for samples of educational flyers and leaflets.
5. Offer incentives for recycling such as lower garbage collection fees. The community may ultimately want to consider a variable rate or volume base solid waste fee. Example: The resident has the option of using a 30, 60 or 90 gallon trash can, with the cost of service for each being \$5, \$10, and \$15, respectively. If you recycle, you may only need the use of the smallest trash bin, thereby saving on your monthly trash disposal bill.

Another incentive could be a Recycling Lottery. The community chooses each month a house in one or more locations in the community. If that resident puts out their recyclables at least one time during that month and a minimum of 2 or 3 types of recyclable materials placed in the bin, that resident wins a monetary prize. This can be set-up in various ways as determined by the community leaders.

6. Reject contaminants in the recycling bin by having the recycling collection personnel leave pre-prepared checkoff notes in the residents recycling bin which identify non-recyclable materials (contaminates) and explain why the materials were not collected.
7. The recycling program should only collect materials for which a market already exists. Do not start collecting a material in hopes that a market will soon develop. Find out who you can sell to, what materials they want, the degree of contamination they'll accept, and how they want the material processed and shipped. Estimate the potential revenue and stability of markets and then decide what items to recycle.
8. Collection techniques which require too much effort and thought on the part of the residents or excessive work and expense on the part of the haulers are doomed to failure.

9. Limit materials collected in the recycling program to 4 or 5 materials for the first year. Residents tend to be confused if more materials are collected. After the program has been going well for a year or more, add 1 or 2 materials, if needed, and ensure the public is educated on the new items being collected.
10. The following materials should be considered at the beginning of the program: aluminum and steel cans, newspapers, cardboard, #1 and # 2 plastics and glass. Items to be added after the program matures may include: mixed paper, used motor oil, and textiles.
11. An anti-scavenging ordinance should be passed prior to the start of the recycling program.
12. Schedule pickup times for recyclables in the contract so to ensure collection personnel and vehicles are not collecting materials prior to 7:00 A.M. Too early of a collection time will reduce participation rates.

Look into organizing a recycling cooperative in your area. The reason for it is that if you can put 20 tons or more of clean recyclable material on a truck, someone will buy it. Joint efforts with other communities and/or counties may ensure that you collect sufficient quantity of materials. In addition, there must be sufficient coordination of shipping and processing of the materials. Quality and quantity are important keys to recycling.

The cost of recycling almost always exceeds the revenue earned from the sale of recyclables. But a combination of revenues, avoided landfill tipping fees and extending the life of the landfill, could equal or exceed the cost of running a recycling program.

MECHANICS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

- (Commitment and initiative at the highest level of local government
- (Innovative and consistent education and communication with all affected parties
- (Public works support, including monitoring and follow-up
- (Equipment and facilities in place to enable efficient material handling and product flow
- (Don't just talk about it. Take action and do it!

If you have any questions regarding recycling programs, equipment needs, and/or markets, please call the Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction Program at the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) 601/961-5171.