



Champion's Guide for: Waste Reduction – PAPER

The Opportunity: *Reduce Paper Waste*

90% of office waste is made up of materials that can be readily diverted from ending up in a landfill or incinerator, and paper products represent over half (54%) of it. The average American office worker uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper each year. That's enough paper to build a twelve foot high wall that stretches from New York City to San Francisco every year!

Cambridge municipal employees used over six and a half million sheets of paper last year. If every City employee **reduces their paper use by 10%, or just 9 pieces of paper a week**, we can save 80 full grown trees and 1,700,000 gallons of water. Most of the paper waste generated during our work day can be significantly cut or avoided altogether with some thoughtful consumption habits - saving energy, natural resources, and money.

What's the Impact? *What's Your Paper Trail?*

Paper products put a heavy burden on the environment. It takes the equivalent of two gallons of gasoline, over 50 gallons of water, and 6% of a full grown tree to make just one ream (500 sheets) of paper. The City of Cambridge purchased over 13,000 reams of paper over the past 12 months.

In addition, for each sheet of paper used, the City incurs not only purchasing costs, but also delivery, copying, printing, postage, recycling, and disposal costs - and it all adds up. A recent Minnesota study estimates that the costs of *using* paper in the office can run 13 to 31 times the cost of *purchasing* the paper in the first place. This would put the true cost of Cambridge's municipal paper use between \$550,000 and \$1.3 million each year.

Reduce Paper Waste: *Paper Cuts*

We're asking City employees to practice thoughtful consumption habits and reduce their paper waste by following the 3R's of waste reduction - ***Reduce-Reuse-Recycle***.

There's a good reason **Reduce** is listed first. The simplest way to reduce paper waste is to eliminate using it altogether. Making a new paper product requires a lot of energy and natural materials. Reducing paper use is the most effective 3R practice, because it means not producing unnecessary paper products in the first place – so there's zero impact on the environment, our health and communities, and our budget.

Reuse is the next best habit for paper waste reduction because it allows every paper product (and all the energy and raw materials that went into making it) to be used to the fullest extent before disposing of it. Before you throw it out, consider if it could be used again. And don't forget - buying something that can be reused means fewer purchases and fewer trips to the waste bin.

Recycling is the last stop before a paper product goes to a landfill or incinerator. Currently, less than half of all post-consumer paper discarded in the United States is recovered for recycling. The EPA estimates that producing a paper product from recycled material requires only 60% of the energy and half the water than



normally used in processing paper from virgin wood. And the Energy Information Administration reports that recycling a ton of paper can save 17 trees.

How You Can Help: *The Champion's Role*

1. Hang “*Reduce*” posters in strategic places around office spaces. Reminders will be sent to swap out posters to “*Reuse*” and “*Recycle*” every six weeks or so.
2. Ask your department leadership to help spread the word by working with them to include a “Think Before You Print” reminder to their e-mail signature. Add it to your own electronic signature.
3. Lead by example: Double-side your printouts, use overhead projectors at meetings, reuse file folders, and recycle your paper coffee cup. Focus on a few behavior habits you can change and spread the word.
4. Visit cground.cambridgeMA.gov/GreenSense for resources, directions and tips.
5. Meet with your department head to determine what action-items make the most sense to encourage in your department/building. **Choose one or two actions from each of the lists below:**

Reduce

- Save electronic files instead of paper files.
- Communicate electronically – use e-mails or shared drives to exchange information.
- Use overhead projectors instead of handouts at meetings - locations of meeting rooms with overhead projectors and instructions for how to use them are posted on the GreenSense website.
- Double-sided printing and copying - choose to double-side your printouts and cut your paper use in half!
- Think before you print - reduce margin sizes and font sizes when possible. Preview documents for spelling or formatting errors before hitting the Print button. Print only the pages that you need.
- Opt out of junk mail on CatalogChoice.org. Alternatively, work with your department head to assign responsibility to collect unwanted catalogs, circulars and other direct marketing mail and use preformatted postcards (found on GreenSense website) to request removal from mailing lists.

Reuse

- Trading Post – work with your department/building to determine if creating a Trading Post is right for your department. If it already exists, make sure everyone is aware of its location and encourage its use.
- Reuse file folders, hanging folders, binders and interoffice envelopes.
- Give it a second chance – use single-sided printouts as scratch paper. Or work with the City Print Shop to make bound notebooks from single-sided printouts (instructions on GreenSense website).
- Buy paper with the highest percentage of postconsumer recycled content available (min. 30% or higher).

Recycle

- Make sure all office spaces have a recycle bin next to each trash bin.
- Visit cambridgeMA.gov/Recycle for a full list of recyclable items, including:
 - ❖ All office paper/cardboard (staples, paperclips, envelopes with windows, spiral notebooks OK)
 - ❖ Paper cups
 - ❖ Pizza boxes (empty, oil stains OK)
 - ❖ Frozen food boxes
 - ❖ Shredded paper (in a paper or clear plastic bag)

Sources and More Information

www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org

www.reduce.org

www.storyofstuff.org

www.stopwaste.org/docs/paperlessguide.pdf

www.nrdc.org/cities/living/paper/strategies.asp

www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Paper/Prevention/