

Guidelines for Minimising Waste at Public Events

Why Plan a Zero Waste Event ?

At each festival or event hundreds or thousands of people gather to enjoy themselves, but in doing so they generate thousands of tonnes of waste - empty bottles, used paper plates, plastic cutlery and glasses, packaging, unwanted food and drink, waste water, cartons, general waste, and plastic bags.

If you are organising an event or are a member of a committee or club, this will show you how to hold **an event that will minimise waste and maximise recycling**.

These guidelines apply to all events regardless of size, and are as relevant to a kindergarten fete as they are to a major international music festival.

Most New Zealanders care about the environment and will be pleased to support an event as patrons and sponsors, where waste minimisation is undertaken and promoted. You can make a real difference. Your environmentally friendly event will minimise waste going to landfill, increase the volume of materials recycled or biodegraded, and make your event a waste management success !

Event organisers have the most influence in minimising waste at public events whether they are a professional company, a member of the public, staff of a school, the management committee of a sporting organisation or a service club. They are often volunteers.

Other stakeholders may find this information useful whether they are site owners, event owners, sponsors, food and drink vendors, patrons or service contractors.

What is waste at a public event ?

Waste generated at public events can usually be separated into two categories - recyclable and biodegradable. Recyclables such as drink containers, and biodegradable materials that will decompose including organic materials such as; food scraps, 'paper' cups, cutlery and plates made from cornstarch or similar, cardboard and paper.

It is also necessary to consider the disposal of other waste that is not recyclable or disposable, such as disposable nappies, cigarette butts, and liquid waste.

Other waste should be removed from the site and disposed of as general waste. This includes cable ties, plastic bags, broken chairs, and pieces of power cables.

1 Before the Event - gain commitment

Involve all the stakeholders - from site owners, event owners and sponsors, to vendors, patrons and supply contractors. **Site owners** will be supportive but they may have specific requirements or conditions you must take into account for any event on their property. Liaison with **event owners** is important to gain their support and to encourage them to see waste minimisation as valuable.

Sponsors are attracted to minimal waste events and will be able to gain promotional benefit, particularly if it is a Zero Waste event.

Vendors need to be informed that you are minimising waste. Their involvement is best gained by inserting a short clause in their contract requiring them to supply materials and follow procedures in line with these guidelines. Give them as much notice, advice and help as possible.

Service contractors offer cleaning services, bin provision, waste collection and material recovery and separation as well as infrastructure and facilities such as fences, chairs and portable toilets. Negotiate mutually acceptable contractual arrangements in line with these guidelines. Both service contractors and vendors will want to know about the type and quantity of bins or drums and their locations.

Patrons respond well to waste minimisation events. Tell them what to expect in your promotional material and by clear communications and signage at the event.

Promotion

Having an event that diverts waste from landfill is something of which you will be proud. It helps attract both patrons and sponsors so it is worth telling the world!

- Issue media releases and advertising about your waste minimisation goals
- Obtain the endorsement of a well-known member of the community or local celebrity who will promote the event - mentioning its environmental credentials.
- Promote your environmental objectives using word of mouth, volunteers and multi media avenues, including on your website.
- Include information in official programs and relevant magazines and journals.
- Don't forget word of mouth and the power of volunteers.

Brief the vendors

It is important to tell food and drink vendors what is expected of them.

- Specify in vendor contracts that they may only sell or use products that are recyclable, biodegradable or reusable
- Provide a list of products acceptable for use at the event with the product supplier contact details.
- Consider providing a separate list of materials that are not acceptable and should not be brought into the event.
- Give vendors as much lead time as possible.

Identify and engage contractors

Service contractors include companies offering cleaning services, bins, waste collection and material recovery and separation. Consider the environmental outcomes you want to achieve when choosing service contractors. Do they offer;

- liquid waste collection
- access to a material recovery facility
- composting facilities or access to them
- quantitative information about:
 - the amount and weight of material recycled
 - the amount and weight of material composted
- the total amount of waste diverted from landfill • the rate of contamination of the two waste types and where it occurs.

Include waste management on your site plan

The waste management site plan will:

- identify the location of food and beverage vendors that will require waste collection
- identify the best positions for signage
- identify the placement of areas for tables and chairs where people will eat and drink, and therefore the best position for bins
- show access lanes for service vehicles such as equipment suppliers, vendors and waste services contractors before, during and after the event
- help ensure that signage is well placed and can be easily seen by vendors and patrons.

The plan is an important planning tool for you and your waste services contractor who need to:

- calculate the number and type of bins required
- plan bin locations and service areas
- clarify access ways for vehicles
- determine signage and its positioning
- communicate with vendors and volunteers.

Arrange bin signage

Signage:

- Informs patrons about what is
- identifies bins and their intended contents
- educates patrons about what products are recyclable or biodegradable.

Improve waste outcomes

Uniform signage and bin management means patrons face identical choices at different events. Signage should be:

- placed at eye-level where possible and on all accessible sides of the bins
- weatherproof
- reusable, lightweight and portable.

Bin caps

Label bins using bin caps. These are available from bin cap retailers, waste services and contractors. Bin caps

- provide patrons with single points for all waste disposal
- have areas suitable for placement of sponsor logos
- are suitable for use on 240 litre wheelie bins.

Zero Waste Event Checklist

1 **Generate commitment**

- Advise stakeholders of waste management plans.
- Invite stakeholders' input.
- Advise stakeholders of your requirements and expectations

2 **Brief food and drink vendors**

- Inform vendors of your requirements
- Provide vendors with product supplier details
- Write clause into vendor contracts.

3 **Identify and engage contractors**

- Identify appropriate contractors with access to material recovery facilities
- Ensure they can supply all other requirements
- Advise the need for collection results

4 **Include waste management on your site plan**

- Check volumes required for cardboard and paper collection
- Arrange provision and collection of liquid waste drums
- Calculate numbers of bins, drums and skips required.
- Decide on positions of bins, drums and skips.
- Plan to convert existing stand-alone general waste bins or cover and remove from use.
- Plan the emptying of bins and how bins will be replaced when full.
- Consider peak flows when planning bin collection.
- Provide baby-care facilities with designated bins for disposable nappies.
- Provide special-purpose containers for cigarette butts.
- Prepare public address announcements to coincide with crowd movements.

5 **Arrange bin signage**

- Calculate numbers of signs required.
- Position bins. Identify with labels for recyclables and biodegradables.
- Position signs at the best places (according to your plan).
- Put up signs asking patrons to take home other rubbish.
- Use multi-media signage such as banners, posters, video screens.
- Advertise the baby-changing facilities.
- Position bins and bin caps.
- Place signage and banners.

More to come

2 During the event

Monitor vendors

Ensure that vendors are meeting their obligations:

- using back of house collection points
- separating waste types
- using only permitted materials.

Monitor bin usage

Front of house waste will be generated during the event but will peak at meal times. Take this into account when planning the collection or swap-over of bins.

- Adjust bin locations as necessary.
- Exchange or empty bins as necessary.
- Ensure that site and bins are clean and tidy at all times.
- Ensure that access ways for vehicles remain clear.

Waste will be generated back of house from early in the event.

The peak flow of different waste types will alter during the course of the event:

- Cardboard and paper will be produced in bulk before the event starts as vendors set up.
- Food and liquid wastes will be disposed of at the end of the day or the event.

Ensure that the collection or swap-over of bins corresponds with these demand peaks.

Communicate with patrons

Use the public address system to:

- encourage correct use of bins
- advertise baby change facilities
- advertise cigarette disposal.

Use staff or trained volunteers to:

- help to reduce the mix-up of waste streams and educate patrons
- retrieve incorrectly placed items with long-armed grabbing devices.

3 After the event

Clean up check

Check that vendors have left their sites clean and as clear as possible. Provide staff or trained volunteers with bags, gloves etc. Get them to go round the site and retrieve any material. Non-recyclable and non-biodegradable material should be removed from the site and disposed of as general waste.

This includes:

- cable ties
- plastic bags
- broken chairs
- pieces of power cable.

Check with waste services contractors that collected material has been delivered to the correct recycling or composting facilities.

Data collection

Your feedback and data are of great assistance to Zero Waste NZ Trust and to future event organisers. They enable us to identify areas for improvement and target resources more effectively. Obtain data from contractors on waste materials collected:

- Number of patrons at the event.
- Amount of recyclable material sent to a recycling depot.
- Amount of biodegradable material sent to a composting facility.
- Amount of material prevented from going to landfill (the total of the two above).

Reporting on your success !

Information on the waste outcomes of your event is very useful to Zero Waste NZ Trust. This will include

- number of patrons at the event
- amount of drink containers collected
- amount of cardboard and paper collected
- amount of biodegradable material sent to a composting facility
- amount of material diverted from landfill.

It should be reported to:

- sponsors
- site owners
- event owners
- Local newspapers
- Zero Waste New Zealand Trust

Managing bins and types of waste

Front and back of house will generate different kinds of waste and volumes

Influence this by:

- working with vendors
- controlling what patrons bring in. This is much easier at gated or closed events.

Front of house

Front of house waste can usually be limited to two main types

- drink containers
- biodegradables (including cardboard and paper).

Cardboard and paper are not usually generated in sufficient quantities front of house to warrant separate disposal. These should be added to the biodegradable waste stream, It is best not to provide general waste bins because patrons tend to use them for all their rubbish. Encourage patrons to take all non-recyclable or non-biodegradable waste away from the event.

Products such as disposable nappies must be dealt with separately. By providing a baby changing facility with designated bins for nappies and other related items, the waste is captured at source while patrons with young children will feel catered for. Advertising the facility will encourage patrons to use it.

Cigarette butts pose a threat to the environment if washed into waterways. Consider providing special purpose containers for cigarette butts and promoting their availability.

Limit littering and contamination of bins by considering:

- the number of bins
- the placement of bins
- the type of bins
- how they are presented.

Each of these factors influences how people will use them and whether they will use them correctly.

Bin placement

The two bin types should be placed together so that patrons face identical choices at each location. The bins should be easily identifiable and consistent in appearance. This can be done by fitting the bins with bin caps.

While front of house bins should be located near food and drink vendors, disposal does not always happen close to the point of purchase. For optimal material recovery bins should also be located:

- at event entry points
- near high-traffic areas
- at disposal points such as toilets, exit and entry points, and car parks
- at accessible points that coincide with movement of patrons and catch their attention
- between 3-14 metres from the next nearest bin.

Do not place bins in areas where there are likely to be queues.

Monitor bin usage and adjust their positions as necessary.

Existing stand-alone general waste bins should be turned into bins for recyclable or biodegradable materials or covered and taken out of use.

Placing staff or trained volunteers at bins can help to reduce the mix-up of waste types.

Once a bin becomes contaminated it can quickly end up filled with incorrect items as people ignore signage and look into bins to see what should go in.

By equipping staff and volunteers at bins with long-armed grabbing devices, items placed incorrectly can be easily retrieved and patrons made aware of which bin to use and why.

Back of house

Back of house waste differs from front of house in both type of waste and peak volumes and timing. Restrict vendors to supplying only recyclable drink containers and biodegradable plates and cutlery.

Back of house recyclables and biodegradables will require bins, but additional facilities will also need to be provided for the collection of cardboard, paper and liquid waste. Depending on the quantity of material you expect to be produced cardboard and paper will need to be collected separately. Ask the contracted collector to identify what volume is required to make recycling viable and whether this will require designated bins or skips.

Liquid waste mainly comprises cooking oils and grey water such as washing-up water. Food vendors using cooking oil usually dispose of it at the end of the event; however for longer events, more than one batch of oil may be used.

To avoid vendors inappropriately disposing of liquid waste:

- determine how much liquid waste may be produced at the event
- arrange for provision and collection of appropriately sized drums
- inform vendors that all liquid wastes must be disposed of in the drums provided.

Other materials

Minimise the type of material being generated back of house by telling vendors that certain materials are not acceptable. Where this is unavoidable ensure the vendor is required to take these materials offsite for recycling or disposal elsewhere.

Bin placement

The same bin design and signage should be applied to back of house, but bin caps should not be used. Collection and placement should be more specifically planned to meet vendors' requirements.

- Locate bins within easy access of vendors.
- Provide receptacles for four waste types:
- drink containers
- biodegradable material
- liquid waste
- cardboard and paper.

Guidelines for handling cardboard and paper

- Be aware that peak volume is likely to occur at the set up of the event.
- Designate a special area back of house for placement of material.
- Assign staff to collect material as it is generated.
- Remove material to a service area equipped with larger containers.

Guidelines for handling liquid waste

- Inform vendors that liquid waste must be dealt with as specified in their contract.
- Provide drums.
- Arrange collection after the event.

Our thanks to Zero Waste South Australia for allowing us to adapt the information from their booklet, “Guidelines for Event Organisers in South Australia”.