



## **Guidelines for a Successful Zero Waste Event**

***IT'S ALL IN THE PLANNING!***

[HTTP://EVERGREENEASY.ORG/](http://evergreeneasy.org/)

Thanks for keeping the green in Evergreen by organizing a Zero Waste Event! The key to minimizing the amount of landfill waste generated by your event is by planning for zero waste far enough in advance. These guidelines lay out the necessary steps for attaining success. Achieving absolute zero waste is very difficult and not always practical; the point is to try to minimize waste as much as possible and move toward Zero Waste with each event. Feel free to contact EASY at any time to speak with a ZW mentor who can walk you through the process or answer any questions.

### **BEFORE THE EVENT**

You've finalized the date and location of your event and are eager to start planning the logistics. At this point:

- Designate a Zero Waste Coordinator from within your organization or group to facilitate zero waste planning and to be the main point of contact for your EAS+Y mentor.
- Contact EAS+Y to set up a planning meeting with your ZW mentor.  
([info@EvergreenEASY.org](mailto:info@EvergreenEASY.org) or 720-536-0069)

### **STEP 1: AT LEAST ONE OR TWO MONTHS PRIOR TO THE EVENT, FINALIZE THE TYPE OF FOOD/BEVERAGE SERVICES AND GOALS FOR ZERO WASTE**

- Determine the approximate attendance at the event.
- Determine whether and what type of beverages and/or food will be available.
- Plan beverage and food services to minimize landfill waste by reducing or eliminating the use of disposable-only products. Provide reusable, recyclable, or, in some cases, compostable products as much as possible.
- Determine whether beverage and/or food service will be provided by a caterer or individual vendors..
  - Catering companies are more likely to offer zero waste-friendly reusable materials, especially for smaller events.
  - If multiple vendors will be present, they should be contacted early to inform them of your requirements. If possible, coordinate between vendors so that they use the same types of recyclable or compostable supplies to simplify the task of recycling for your attendees and ZW volunteers.
- Determine whether event will generate a lot of food waste. If so, consider composting as well as recycling.
- Determine whether a waste hauler will need to be hired for the event or is already under contract.

- If a waste hauler is not already under contract, make arrangements with one early to ensure that bins for recyclables and landfill waste can be dropped off before the event and picked up afterwards. Clearly marked dumpsters for landfill and recyclables will also be required. It's important to begin discussing the collection details ahead of time (location of dumpsters, quantity and size of recycle and trash bins needed, delivery time and location, and pick-up after the event).
- Currently there are no waste haulers that offer compostables pick-up in Evergreen, so arrangements must be made separately. EAS+Y is available to help with this. For a \$50 fee, EAS+Y will transport compostables to a commercial composting facility drop-off.
- Publicize from the outset that you are planning a Zero Waste Event in order to be more eco- and community-friendly. If appropriate, encourage attendees to bring reusable mugs, refillable water bottles, or even their own tableware.

## **STEP 2: FINALIZE FOOD/BEVERAGE ARRANGEMENTS THAT PROMOTE ZERO WASTE**

### **More Tips for Moving Toward Zero Waste with your Caterer or Vendors.**

- If event is to be catered, select a company that offers zero waste set-up (reusable plates, cups, utensils, cloth tablecloths and napkins).
- When selecting a caterer or vendors, encourage them to serve finger foods that don't require a lot of plates and utensils. Avoid individually packaged products whenever possible.
- To minimize plastic bottles, plan to provide large water dispensers with paper cups.
- If event includes composting, it is critical that all vendors comply with requirement to use only compostable cups, bowls, and plates. It is very difficult to tell the difference between compostable and recyclable cups and plates, and to sort them into the proper bins. The resulting "contamination" of bins can result in all discards going to the landfill.
- If event includes composting, be aware that products labeled bio-degradable are not necessarily compostable. To ensure that your compostables will biodegrade completely and safely in a large facility leaving no residue, it is critical that you require products that have been certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI). All compostables should have the BPI logo on them.
- If there will be giveaways, consider items that have little packaging to be discarded.

## **STEP 3: DETERMINE THE NUMBER AND LOCATION OF ZERO WASTE STATIONS**

- Normally, one waste station is needed for about every 200 people.
- A waste station consists of a recycling bin, a composting bin (if appropriate), a pail for liquids, and a landfill bin.
- The siting of the bins should be planned ahead. Stations should be located near food vendors and eating areas, and not on the fringes of activity.
- If a bar set-up is included, a bin should be provided there for recycling empty bottles and aluminum cans. The bin should be placed away from the public so it is not used for trash discards. A bucket behind the bar for emptying bottles and aluminum cans prior to recycling should also be part of set-up.

- If the event includes a food preparation area, a landfill and composting (if composting is included) bin should be located there. A recycle bin should be provided only if recyclables are emptied and, if food-soiled, rinsed prior to recycling.
- EAS+Y can lend signage for your waste stations, plastic bins for collecting compost, pails for collecting liquids, and grabbers to remove items that are improperly discarded.
- It is important to discuss bag liners for your bins with an EAS+Y ZW mentor. Normally, recycle bins should not have plastic liners in them. Haulers have to remove them manually at their facility before material can be recycled. If plastic liners are used, the recyclables should be emptied from them and the liners reused at another event, if possible. Compostable liners are available for compost bins, however, EAS+Y currently uses plastic bags and empties them into the compost roll-off because our current compost facility does not accept compostable bags (they clog the equipment).

#### **STEP 4: RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO BE WASTE STATION MONITORS AT EVENT**

- The success of a Zero Waste Event depends largely on having monitors at each waste station to ensure that visitors deposit discards in the proper bins.
- Get commitments from volunteers in advance and create a schedule for 2 hour shifts. Include volunteers for set-up and take-down time.
- An EAS+Y mentor can help identify sources for volunteers, and can provide volunteer training either ahead of time or at the time of the event.
- For large events, it may be necessary to have volunteers available to empty full recycle/landfill/ compostable bins into larger dumpsters during event.

#### **DAY OF EVENT**

You've completed all the planning for a successful Zero Waste Event and now the day is close at hand. Make sure the waste hauler has final instructions for delivering and picking up recycle and landfill bins, and will have one or more recycle and trash dumpsters on-site. If dumpsters are not clearly marked Recycle and Trash, they should be labeled using a large sheet of paper or poster board (laminated if the event is outside and signs may get wet).

#### **STEP 5: SET-UP BEFORE EVENT BEGINS**

- Arrange with EAS+Y mentor for the drop-off of signage, bins for compostables (if appropriate), and pails for liquids.
- For larger events, EAS+Y mentor can help guide set-up and meet with volunteers on-site.
- Bins at each waste station must touch each other. It is essential that there be no single bins in sight so attendees do not incorrectly discard items. If the event facility you are using has extra bins on site, remove them to avoid confusion.
- Buckets set out at the waste stations allow attendees to pour liquids from bottles/cans before recycling them.
- EAS+Y Recycle and Trash signs have holes in them from which to hang samples of what can go in each bin. Request samples from vendors and hang from signs.

- Vendors and/or caterers/bartenders should be instructed to flatten and stack cardboard boxes so they can be placed next to recycle bins.
- Bar staff should be reminded that liquids should be emptied into pail prior to discarding bottles and cans into recycle bin.
- Kitchen staff at events that include composting should be advised to use compost bin only for food waste.
- Make sure waste station volunteers have received instructions as to what discards belongs in which bin.

#### **STEP 6: DURING THE EVENT**

- Your organization's Zero Waste Coordinator should rotate among the waste stations to ensure that all is going well and that full bins are being emptied into dumpsters or replaced with extra empty bins.
- The Zero Waste Coordinator should also make sure volunteers are relieved with new ones after their two-hour shifts.
- **IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT:** It is important to minimize contamination of bins with inappropriate discards. It's always best for waste station volunteers to advise throwing an item in the landfill bin, if she/he is not sure where it belongs. If more than about 10% of materials discarded into recycling bins consist of landfill waste, the waste hauler has no choice but to send all the materials to the landfill.
- Volunteers should scan Trash, Recycling, and Compost bins occasionally to see if there are improperly discarded items. Use grabbers to place them in correct bins.
- If possible, the Zero Waste Coordinator should track the number of recycle and trash bins (and compost if included) or bags that get emptied into larger dumpsters during the event. This allows your organization the opportunity to share accomplishments afterwards.

#### **STEP 7: AFTER THE EVENT: CLEAN UP AND CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS**

- Make sure all bins of recyclables and landfill waste are emptied into the proper dumpsters.
- Collect and return all materials provided by EAS+Y (signs, grabbers, pails, compost bins).
- Note your successes and lessons learned for next time.
- Promote your organization's Zero Waste success on your website and elsewhere.

#### **CONGRATULATIONS ON BEING A ZERO WASTE CHAMPION!**

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**Rotary**   
Club of Evergreen Colorado