

# Waste Management Regulations for Commercial Buildings

**TWENTY YEARS AGO** the only people digging through the waste landfills were archeologists. Today all over the globe landfills are being mined for the valuable resources they hold. Rich in the discarded resources of yesteryear, these “vaults” are yielding thousands of tons of metal, paper and plastics annually.

Before recycling became a common practice, millions of tons of reusable material was simply discarded and buried in landfills. Today, as the cost of resources skyrockets, we are re-examining these old habits.

Here in Ontario, more and more of companies have begun to sort through their waste bins – hoping to remove recyclable materials and further reduce the amount of unnecessary “waste” going into landfills.

The Ontario Ministry of Environment’s 3Rs Regulations (102/94), have been in place since 1994. They require businesses and institutions over a certain size to conduct waste audits and set up waste reduction plans. Those to whom the regulations apply include educational institutions with 350 or more students and designated office buildings, hospitals, and multi-unit residential buildings.

The Government of Ontario has established a target of 60% diversion from landfill to recycling compared to the base of 28% diversion in 2004.

Under Ontario Regulation 102/94, all organizations included in the program (companies occupying 90,000 square feet or more of commercial space) must complete an annual Solid Waste Audit and devise a Waste Reduction Work Plan.

The Solid Waste Audit is to determine what recyclables are still present. The Waste Reduction Work Plan is to divert this recyclable material away from landfill.

In accordance with the 3Rs Regulations, the Waste Audit is a study of the solid waste generated that goes beyond simply measuring the quantity and composition of waste: It attempts to identify both the reasons that the waste was created and the factors affecting how it is managed.

According to the regulation, the audits must address:

- The amount, nature and composition of the waste generated in all functional areas of the establishment
  - How the waste is produced, including relevant management policies and practices
- And
- How the waste is managed

There are four basic steps to implementing a waste reduction program as required under regulation 102/94:

- Conduct a Waste Audit
- Develop a Waste Reduction Work Plan
- Implement the Work Plan
- Update the Audit and Work Plan annually

The information derived from the Waste Audit is the basis for developing the Waste Reduction Work Plan. The Work Plan addresses the 3Rs opportunities to be implemented, following the 3Rs hierarchy: with reduction as the first priority, followed by reuse, followed by recycling.

Regulation 102/94 requires that the owner or operator of a designated establishment have in place a continuing Waste Reduction Program that makes the 3Rs a regular part of their operation. It further requires that all Waste Audits and Waste Reduction Work Plans be updated at least once a year, ensuring that they remain current. A business that experiences rapid growth or significant change in production processes may need to update its audit and Work Plan more frequently.

The goal is to achieve or exceed compliance with the regulations to ensure that every possible recyclable material is diverted from the waste stream and put into the appropriate recycling streams.

Here is a list of materials typically found in an office building that must be diverted:

- Aluminum, Tin and other metals
- Corrugated Cardboard
- Fine Paper
- Newsprint
- Beverage Containers (Glass and Plastic)
- Wood

Soon this list will include organic waste (food waste) just as we have seen with the residential green bins. With the diversion goals being increased in 2009, organic waste will most certainly be targeted. In fact many of the large property managers have implemented organic recycling already in their buildings, ahead of the compliance curve.

These efforts made now will ensure that the landfills of today will not be a treasure trove for resource hunters of tomorrow. The 3Rs ensure that we will save on energy and the precious commodities available to us in finite amounts. Source separation recycling is good economics and hugely beneficial for the planet. It’s an excellent and necessary low-cost or no-cost element of any building’s environmental programming.

The province is serious about these regulations: Failure to abide after being notified by the ministry can result in fines up to \$6 million dollars per day for companies convicted of a first major offence. It is possible for individuals to be fined \$4 million dollars per day and face a prison term of up to five years less a day. The regulations also explicitly state that the owner of the establishment must ensure that waste is separated according to material type and subsequently recycled.

If you need help and advice on conducting your waste audit and developing a waste reduction plan, there is detailed information in the *Guide to Waste Audits and Reduction Work Plans for C&D Projects*. Additional help and advice is available through a number of organizations and private companies. A list of resources is available through the Ontario Environment Business Directory ([www.envirodirectory.on.ca](http://www.envirodirectory.on.ca)) or call (416) 325-4000 or Toll free: 1-800-565-4923

Resources: <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/publications/forms/index.php#AuditandReduction>

*With thanks to Mark Thompson, Senior Account Manager U-PAK Disposals Ltd. /U-PAK Recycling Ltd. 416-550-7087 markthompson@upak.net*



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- Work closely with your corporation to review and improve existing recycling and waste management programs to reduce cost and to meet ISO standards

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