

**CONDUCTING  
COMMUNITY  
RECYCLING EVENTS:  
A PROCEDURE GUIDE**

**Solid Waste Institute  
of Northeast Oklahoma**

## **CONDUCTING COMMUNITY RECYCLING EVENTS: A PROCEDURE GUIDE**

Each year Oklahomans generate nearly three million tons of trash. Most of this solid waste is collected and transported to landfills or other disposal facilities that are designed to protect the public's health and the natural environment. In addition, concerned Oklahoma citizens are increasingly becoming aware of the benefits of recycling waste materials into new products.

In spite of this awareness, great quantities of waste materials are unnecessarily being thrown away throughout Oklahoma. Unfortunately, they are often discarded in ways that threaten our health, environment and economic well-being. Household wastes like old refrigerators, hot-water heaters and other appliances litter roadside dumps across the state. Automotive wastes including used motor oil, antifreeze, and lead-acid batteries are often dumped haphazardly on the ground. These practices can contaminate and threaten the quality of our streams, lakes and ground water.

Fortunately, with only a modest effort, you can help provide a solution! Most citizens would like to dispose of the items in a responsible manner but do not know what their options are. Many would welcome the opportunity to recycle hard-to-dispose articles. Because Oklahoma has strong recycling markets for metals and automotive wastes, community recycling events targeted at these items are very successful. With a little planning and organization, you can provide this valuable service to the public.

This manual outlines the steps necessary to plan, organize, and implement a successful community recycling event. The step-by-step procedural outline and time line may be modified to serve the unique needs of your community.

The Solid Waste Institute of Northeast Oklahoma (SWINO) is a nonprofit, public-interest organization working to help develop progressive and environmentally-responsible solid waste management practices in northeastern Oklahoma counties. SWINO has the necessary experience and resources to assist your recycling efforts or to answer your questions. For more information, contact the Institute at 111 W. Shawnee, Tahlequah, OK 74464, (918) 456-0116.

**BE PART OF THE SOLUTION . . . . . RECYCLE!**

# PROCEDURAL OUTLINE

## I. PLANNING

- A. **Begin planning about eight weeks before the event.**
- B. **Establish community interest for sponsorship of the event with support from the city and/or county governments, civic organizations, schools, or other community-based groups.**
  - 1. Sponsors provide support (i.e. services, funds, materials, etc.) needed for printing, advertising and equipment.
  - 2. Sponsors provide either volunteer or paid workers.
- C. **Identify and contact individual(s) or committee to organize the event.**
- D. **Determine which recyclable materials will be collected at the event by contacting and securing participation of recycling businesses.**

**NOTE:** Priority should be given to used motor oil, lead-acid (auto) batteries, metal household appliances and scrap metals. May also include “common household recyclables” such as aluminum cans, paper, glass, plastics and tin cans.

**CAUTION:** Do NOT plan to collect any recyclable material that will not be accepted by an identified area recycling business.

- 1. Find recycling business in telephone directories, recycling market guides and with SWINO assistance. Look under telephone yellow pages headings: Oils - Waste; Scrap Metals; Recycling Centers; Waste Paper; and Batteries.
- 2. Contact businesses and determine their interest in “servicing” the event by accepting collected materials.
- 3. Determine businesses’ conditions for acceptance of materials.
  - a. Are materials (such as used motor oil) received from commercial sources acceptable, or must the materials come from private individuals only?
  - b. Will collected materials be purchased by the recycling business or accepted on a donation basis only?
  - c. Are any fees charged?

- d. Confirm that businesses will transport materials from the event site.
  4. Determine availability of collection containers from recycling businesses.
  5. Estimate resources available for materials collection including paid or volunteer workers, containers, location, and equipment. Recognize that the collection of more items may require more workers, a larger site, and more participating recycling businesses.
- E. Set date(s) and hours for the event.**  
Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the spring or fall work well.
- F. Find a suitable location to hold the event.**
1. Site requirements: large enough for placement of collection containers and for smooth one-way traffic flow, surface able to withstand heavy vehicular traffic, and convenient location. Isolated, but accessible, areas of government-office parking lots, fairgrounds and other such places work well.
  2. The site must be available for two to four days after the event because the recycling businesses often will not pick up the materials on the day of the event.
  3. Obtain permission to use site.

## **II ORGANIZATION**

- A. Reserve site for the event.**
- B. Contact recycling businesses to arrange for use of collection containers and pick-up times for collected materials. Advise site owner of proposed pick-up schedule.**
- C. Secure equipment for the event.**
1. Make or borrow signs which note "Recycling Event," "Entrance," "Exit," or other information important to the event.
  2. Obtain safety equipment such as gloves, safety vests, and traffic cones to direct vehicles.

3. Arrange for collection containers.
4. Arrange for a front-end loader or backhoe and operator to load appliances and scrap metal.

**D. Secure workers for event.**

1. Volunteers may be recruited from volunteer and civic organizations, schools, community committees and on an individual basis. Typically, a minimum of five to ten volunteer workers are needed to adequately staff the event.
2. Paid workers often include city or county employees needed for equipment operation, community service workers or individuals “contributed” by concerned local businesses.

**E. Advertise and promote the event. Event organizers must assume direct responsibility for seeing that the event is properly advertised.**

1. At least six weeks before the event, prepare and print flyers that can be posted in public places.
  - a. Ask volunteers to post flyers in auto parts, hardware and convenience stores, other local stores, libraries, laundromats, and on bulletin boards in public buildings.
  - b. Include flyers in newsletters from chambers of commerce, community organizations and churches.
2. Distribute recycling brochures which give information about why and how to recycle specific materials. These are available from the Solid Waste Institute and/or state and federal environmental protection agencies. Put brochures in auto parts, hardware and convenience stores, chambers of commerce, other sites, and in newsletters.
3. Newspaper publicity.
  - a. At least two news releases should be submitted to the local newspapers. One should be published about four to six weeks before the event.
  - b. Paid advertising usually requires the sponsorship of an organization or individual concerned about recycling.
4. Radio releases.
  - a. Public service announcements.

- b. Paid advertising.
  - 5. Television advertising.
    - a. Public service announcements and community calendars.
    - b. TV cable channel announcements.
    - c. Paid advertising.
  - 6. Presentations or announcements should be made at civic organization meetings, public events, and community bulletin boards.
- F. Prepare participant survey to collect data about the event.**
- G. Prepare site layout plan.**

Each plan differs by community population, collection site layout, and number of recyclable materials accepted.
- H. Final preparations performed during week before event.**
  - 1. Confirm all arrangements including site reservation, equipment, and participation of recycling businesses.
  - 2. Schedule volunteers of paid workers and contact by telephone to confirm their participation.
  - 3. Arrange for final publicity.
  - 4. Arrange for delivery of large containers such as trailers or roll-off dumpsters on the day before the event or at least one hour before event.
  - 5. Arrange for news media to attend event and take pictures if possible.

### **III EVENT DAY**

- A. Organizers arrive one hour before opening to prepare site according to plan.**
- B. Volunteers should arrive about 30 minutes before opening for instructions.**
- C. Assign specific jobs to volunteers.**

**D. Collect recyclable materials from citizens.**

1. Conduct brief participant survey as they arrive to find out which recyclable materials they are bringing, where they are from and how they heard about the event. Surveyor also helps direct participants to materials collection points.
2. Collect materials from citizens and put recyclables in the proper containers.
3. Thank participants, tell them about next event if one is anticipated and distribute any recycling brochures that are appropriate and available.

**E. If reporters attend, give interviews and encourage them to take photographs.**

**F. Close the event.**

1. Take down all signs.
2. Clean up site.
3. Thank volunteers for helping before they leave.
4. See that all materials are secured and ready for pick up by recycling businesses.

## **IV POST-EVENT ACTIVITIES**

**A. Immediately after event or during next few days:**

1. See that all materials have been picked up by participating recycling businesses.
2. Clean up site if necessary after materials have been removed.
3. Return borrowed equipment.

**B. Contact participating recycling businesses.**

1. Find out weight or volume of materials collected.
2. Inform them of a tentative time schedule for the next event.

- C. Send follow-up news release to participating news media (newspaper, radio, TV) including total amounts of materials collected, number of participants, number of volunteers and thank you for community support.**
- D. Send follow-up letter to volunteers if time and funding allows.**
  - 1. Thank you letter with brief report of materials collected.
  - 2. Volunteer survey with self-addressed stamped envelope to get volunteer's impressions and suggestions for the next event.
- E. Send thank you letters to other individuals and/or organizations who helped make event successful.**
- F. Analyze project results.**
  - 1. Tabulate participant surveys.
  - 2. Record total volume of recyclable materials collected
  - 3. Tabulate volunteer surveys.
  - 4. Take notes from comments made by citizens at the event.
  - 5. Compile information, noting what worked well, and evaluate how to make the next event better.
  - 6. If the event did not turn out as planned, determine if anything could have been done to make it better.
  - 7. Set tentative date for the next event. Every six months (spring and fall) works well for smaller (under 20,000 population) communities; larger (over 20,000 population) communities may wish to have an event every three months.

## **TIME LINE FOR RECYCLING EVENTS**

### **Six weeks to two months before event:**

1. Designate individual or committee to organize event.
2. Secure participation of area recycling businesses and determine which recyclable materials will be collected.
3. Determine date and times for event.
4. Identify and reserve site for event.
5. Determine equipment needed and start obtaining these items.
6. Develop flyers and brochures and take to printer.
7. Send out first news release and/or public service announcements to newspapers, radio and TV stations.
8. Recruit volunteers or paid workers for event.

### **Four to six weeks before event:**

1. Begin distribution of flyers and brochures.
2. Make presentations at community meetings
3. Continue to recruit volunteers and/or paid workers.
4. Work on paid newspaper, radio and TV advertising if budget allows.

### **Two to four weeks before event:**

1. Continue community meeting presentations.
2. Prepare participant survey sheets.
3. Make sure all necessary equipment has been acquired.
4. Schedule times for volunteers or paid workers.
5. Prepare diagram of site plan.

**Week before event:**

1. Call volunteers or paid workers to remind them of their commitment and the times they are scheduled to work.
2. Send out another news release and arrange for reporters to be at event to take pictures and write story.
3. Confirm all arrangements including site reservation, borrowing of equipment, pick up of materials by participating recycling businesses, etc.
4. Arrange for delivery of collection containers.

**Day of the event:**

1. Set up event.
2. Instruct volunteers or workers and assign tasks.
3. Survey participants and collect recyclable materials.
4. Put materials in proper containers.
5. Close down event and make sure materials are ready for pick-up and transport by participating recycling businesses.
6. Clean up site.

**After the event:**

1. Make sure all recyclables have been collected by the participating recycling businesses.
2. Make sure the site is cleaned up after materials have been removed.
3. Contact businesses to find out how much material was collected and tentatively schedule businesses' participation for next event.
4. Prepare follow-up news release for news media.
5. Send thank you letters to volunteers and other contributors.
6. Analyze project and compile summary including suggestions for next

event.

7. Tentatively schedule next event.

For more information, contact the Institute at  
111 W. Shawnee, Tahlequah, OK 74464, or call  
(918) 456-0116 or 1-888-452-0116.