



## Chapter One

# Getting Started

**S**uccessful waste reduction programs hinge on careful planning and organization. This chapter discusses how to lay the groundwork for an effective program. The key steps to getting started are:

- ✓ *Obtaining management support and involvement.*
- ✓ *Establishing your waste reduction team and team leader.*
- ✓ *Setting preliminary program objectives.*
- ✓ *Getting the whole company on board by announcing the program and its goals to all employees*

## Management Support

The support of company management is essential for developing a lasting and successful waste reduction program. At the outset of a program, an endorsement from company management is needed to help establish your waste reduction team. Throughout the program, company management can support your team by endorsing program goals and implementation, communicating the importance of reducing waste within the company, guiding and sustaining the program, and encouraging and rewarding employee commitment and participation in the effort. Stressing the range of benefits that can come from waste reduction, such as cost savings and enhanced company image, will help sell the program to management,

## The Waste Reduction Team

The waste reduction team is a group of employees who are responsible for many of the tasks involved in planning, designing,

implementing, and maintaining the program, A team approach allows these tasks to be distributed among several employees and enables employees from all over the company to directly contribute to reducing waste.

Typically, members of your waste reduction team are responsible for:

- Working with company management to set the preliminary and long-term goals of the waste reduction program.
- Gathering and analyzing information relevant to the design and implementation of the program. (This is done through a waste assessment, which is discussed in Chapter 2.)
- Promoting the program to employees and educating them about how they can participate in the effort.
- Monitoring the progress of the program,
- Periodically reporting to management about the status of the program.

The size of your team should relate to the size of your company and be representative of as many departments or operations as possible. For a modest waste reduction program, an effective team might consist of just one or two people. The ideal candidate for a one-person team would be an individual who wears many hats and is familiar with the overall operations of your company. A two-person team might consist of a company manager and an administrative or technical support person. Larger businesses might opt to create a team of employees from different departments to encourage widespread input and support. These individuals can include environmental managers, building supervisor, technical or operational staff, administrative staff, maintenance staff, and

purchasing staff, or other employees interested in waste reduction.

Team members can be volunteers or appointed members. To increase the members' motivation and interest, it might be appropriate to make membership a sign of special recognition within the company. Whether volunteer or appointed, however, it is important that members be enthusiastic about the waste reduction program and able to commit time to the effort.

Company management or the team should appoint a knowledgeable and motivated team leader. Depending on the size of the company and the type of program being implemented, the position can require a significant amount of time and energy. The leader must be capable of directing team efforts; administering the planning, implementation, and operation of the waste reduction program; and acting as a liaison

between management and the team. Likely candidates include a facilities manager, an environmental manager, or an employee who has championed waste reduction in your company. If possible, the task should be incorporated into the person's job description.

Once your team has been established, members should meet regularly to develop a plan and begin program implementation. The time needed to design and implement a waste reduction program will vary. Generally, large facilities incorporating many different options will need several months to start up a program. Department-specific or more modest programs might be implemented in less than a month. Some businesses might even be able to implement simple options within a matter of days. In any case, the investment of time and resources at this stage will likely be returned by the savings realized through a successful waste reduction program,

## **Waste Reduction at a Multisite HMO**

*Waste reduction programs at companies with a number of different locations are not necessarily more difficult—they just require greater coordination. The northwest region of Kaiser Permanente, a 7,500-employee health maintenance organization (HMO) with 47 sites, recognized early on that an effective waste reduction program depended on promoting and coordinating the efforts at all its locations.*

*In 1989, after an informal paper recycling program commenced in some Kaiser facilities, the company organized a committee to formalize the recycling initiative and identify other waste reduction opportunities. Eventually, the company realized that the committee, renamed the "Green Team," could act as an important coordinating mechanism throughout the HMO's facilities. Consisting of representatives from every strata of the company the team was made responsible for organizing waste management efforts, investigating and recommending alternative products and practices, and acting as a liaison between management, physicians and dentists, and support staff at the different sites,*

*Today the Green Team publishes monthly updates and periodic position statements to update Kaiser employees about the HMO's waste reduction measures. To help with its coordination efforts, the team has organized smaller groups in each division of the company and "Green Line" telephone hotlines have been installed to let employees voice their comments, suggestions, and concerns,*

*Effective coordination efforts have enabled Kaiser to cutback on waste generation and save money at the same time. For example, the company has replaced disposable foam/plastic mattress overlays with reusable pressure-relief mattresses that last up to 10 years and reduce patient bedsores. The new mattresses save almost \$200,000 a year in purchasing costs. The HMO's radiology departments have begun to capture the silver remaining after developing X-rays. Currently, 600 pounds of the heavy metal are recycled per year generating \$30,000 to \$40,000 in revenues. The company also recycles waste paper and cardboard and has begun using a degreaser with reduced hazardous compounds in its housekeeping operations.*

## Setting Preliminary Program Goals

While the general objective of any waste reduction program is to reduce the amount and/or toxicity of municipal solid waste being generated, your first task as a team will be to work with management to establish and record specific, preliminary goals for the program. These goals might include enhancing the company's corporate image or increasing operational efficiency. The goals should be based primarily on how much waste reduction is possible given the level of effort that the company is willing to dedicate to the task. The goals set by the team will provide a framework for specific waste reduction efforts to follow. Keep in mind, however, that the preliminary goals set by the team should be flexible, as they might need to be reexamined and adjusted as specific waste reduction options are considered later on,

## Notifying Personnel

Once the general direction of the waste reduction program has been established, present the program to the rest of the company. This is a good opportunity to get employees excited and generate some momentum behind the team's efforts. The first step is an announcement from the president or

representative of the upper management of the company, demonstrating that the program has full management support and is a high priority for the company. The announcement should:

- Introduce employees to waste reduction.
- Explain how waste reduction can benefit both the company and the environment.
- Outline the design and implementation stages of the program.
- Offer the team leader's name and number and encourage employees to contact him or her with any ideas or suggestions.

Your program is more likely to succeed if you solicit suggestions from employees for reducing waste. To reduce paper, the announcement should be posted in a prominent place, circulated, or distributed through electronic or voice mail, if available.

Throughout the duration of the program, periodic communications (in the form of centrally posted memos or announcements, for example) can help maintain employee support. Employees are likely to appreciate being asked to join in your company's waste reduction efforts, and such offers will encourage consistent participation.