

Green Office Checklist

Compiled by Sundee Wislow, former Midwest Field Coordinator for Heifer International and Chicago Recycling Coalition Board Member.

This checklist is meant to lend guidance and share ideas on how to manage a more environmentally sound office. It was put together by a small office in Chicago and is intended for use in similar environments.

Responsible Paper Usage

- Purchase chlorine-free, high post consumer waste recycled paper.
- Keep mailing lists up-to-date and avoid duplicates.
- Eliminate use of fax cover sheets; write on the fax itself or attach a fax post-it.
- Edit documents on-screen as much as possible to avoid printing multiple drafts.
- Conserve paper by printing and copying double-sided. Buy machines that have this feature and ensure that instructions on using it are clearly labeled.
- Use the reduction feature on a copier to fit more on a page.
- Print using the lowest quality print setting when appropriate to conserve ink and cartridges.
- Save paper by design: use narrower margins and smaller fonts when acceptable.
- Use postcards for mailings when possible and use the smallest size envelope required.
- Save ½ used sheets of office paper (sheets printed on only one side) to stock fax machines, use as scratch paper, and copy and print on when appropriate.
- Use reusable inter-office envelopes.
- Avoid using colored paper when possible.
- Cancel junk mail and mailings you receive two copies of. Visit sites such at www.catalogchoice.org/signup.
- Work with printers who use responsible inks and papers. For example, www.consolidatedprinting.net

In the Kitchen

- Keep washable plates, mugs, glasses and silverware in the kitchen and avoid disposables.
- Purchase recycled and non-chlorine bleached paper towels and napkins.
- Hang hand-towels in the kitchen (and bathroom) and use cloth napkins in place of paper ones. Establish a system for washing cloth items.
- Purchase fair-trade, organic coffee.
- Avoid individually packaged sugar and cream in the kitchen.
- Bring lunches in reusable rather than disposable containers.
- Provide a dish washing area to support staff efforts to use reusables.
- Eat out as opposed to carrying-out food. Bring your own container/s for leftovers and don't accept Styrofoam containers.
- Bring your own bags when shopping.
- Limit or eliminate "fast food" chain restaurants from eating options; provide suggestions for local or organic options.

Office Supplies, Products and Furniture

- Have a "used goods area" within the office and include binders, folders, padded envelopes, cardboard boxes, disks, etc. Use these before purchasing new supplies.
- Purchase and use products that are recycled and recyclable.
- Purchase unbleached or chlorine-free high post consumer waste recycled paper products including binders, envelopes, and even toilet paper.
- Consider products with minimum packaging; purchase in bulk.
- Use refillable pens and tape dispensers instead of disposable ones.
- Use non-toxic, biodegradable cleaning supplies.
- Fix or donate broken furniture rather than sending it to a landfill.
- If replacing your carpet, look for non-toxic recyclable carpeting. <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/>
- Purchase products from local suppliers (to avoid long distance shipping and packaging) and from suppliers committed to environmental issues.
- Purchase used items from thrift stores when possible.

Recycling and Proper Disposal

- ___ Set up a comprehensive office recycling program for paper, cardboard, glass, metals and plastic; and clearly label all recycling bins. www.chicagorecycling.org
- ___ Recycle toner cartridges through manufacturers.
- ___ Dispose of hazardous materials properly. This includes cleaning products, fluorescent light bulbs, computers and electronics, paint, paint thinner, lawn chemicals, gasoline, motor oil, antifreeze, drain cleaners, batteries, old cell phones, and so on. See **Guide to Recycling Household Hazardous Waste**.
- ___ Compost food waste outdoors or indoors. www.chicagorecycling.org
- ___ Recycle packing peanuts. Call 1.800.828.2214 to find the nearest drop off location.
- ___ Donate equipment and furniture to a resale store. Salvation Army offers free pick-up.
- ___ Educate your office about recycling and proper waste management.

Meetings and Events

- ___ Support environmentally responsible hotels and meeting spaces.
- ___ Ensure that meetings and trainings are held at locations served by public transportation. Include train or bus directions on the invite.
- ___ Buy locally grown organic food, and support caterers who do too. www.localorganic.org
- ___ Label foods at events if they are local and organic.
- ___ In evaluations of meetings and events, ask how the event could be “greener” in the future.

Transportation

- ___ Bike, walk, take public transportation or carpool to work.
- ___ Tune-up vehicles on a regular basis.
- ___ Purchase hybrid or fuel-efficient vehicles, or car-share. www.igocars.org
- ___ Use videoconferencing and conference calls instead of travel when possible.

Energy Efficiency

- ___ Turn on *power-save* modes on equipment and appliances.
- ___ Turn off equipment during nights and weekends. Attach TVs, radios, computers, copy machines, microwaves, telephones etc. to power strips for ease in turning them off at the end of the day. (Even when not in use, appliances use electricity. According to Co-op America, turning computers and copiers off after work can cut energy usage by up to 75%.)
- ___ Install an automated thermostat (it's easy to do!) and/or set temperatures so that it will be comfortable during the day, and will use less energy during nights and weekends.
- ___ For windows that receive direct sunlight, close the blinds after work and on weekends to prevent excess heating in the summertime.
- ___ Use a ceiling fan or other fan in the summer time with or without air conditioning. Fans use 98% less energy than A.C. and make you feel up to 6 degrees cooler.
- ___ Open the windows and turn off the air conditioning on nice days.
- ___ Ensure radiators and heaters are not blocked by furniture.
- ___ Add weather stripping to all doors and windows.
- ___ Use energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs.
- ___ Use thin fluorescent tubes (T8 or T5) which use less energy but have the same output as T12 tubes.
- ___ Replace flickering fluorescent lights promptly.
- ___ Turn off lights when exiting rooms.
- ___ Schedule an energy audit through your local power company.
- ___ If you have to use batteries, buy rechargeable batteries and a charger.
- ___ If purchasing new equipment or appliances, look for EPA Energy Star certified options.

Water Efficiency

- Attach low-flow aerators to sink faucets.
- Fix leaky toilets and faucets promptly.
- Check for water leaks at least twice a year.
- Purchase water efficient toilets and dishwashers.
- Research what could be done with office gray water and put ideas into practice.

Indoor Air Quality

- Conduct an air quality check.
- Add plants to offices and use natural fertilizers.
- Change air filters regularly.
- Use low VOC paints for walls.
- Integrate indoor air quality concerns into your purchasing behaviors.
- Turn off air conditioning and open the windows on nice days.
- Establish an effective smoking policy to protect indoor air quality.
- Notify your building manager immediately if you suspect indoor air quality problems.
- Work with building management to ensure only necessary and appropriate pest control practices and non-chemical methods where possible.

Reducing Bird Collisions

(Information provided by the Chicago Ornithological Society, Birds and Buildings Forum, and the National Audubon Society.) About 8 million birds migrate through Chicago each spring and autumn. Unfortunately, window collisions kill approximately 1 billion birds every year in the US, with millions of collisions happening annually in Chicago. Birds do not see glass and are attracted by reflections. Especially during migratory season from mid-March to early June and late August to mid-November, building owners and residents can take the following steps to prevent collisions:

During the day

- Pull down blinds, use external screens, or apply window film to mute reflection.
- Place furniture, banners, or artwork in front of windows to serve as a visual barrier.
- Move green plants away from windows so birds cannot see them as a potential landing spot.

At night, in high-rises

- Turn off lights or close blinds from dusk to daylight.
- Dim or turn off exterior decorative lights, or install motion sensitive lighting.

Green Office Links:

www.greenbiz.com

Green Purchasing:

www.environmentalchoice.com,

<http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/>

<http://www.newdream.org/buy/>

“Working Your Way to a Green Office” booklet:

<http://www.atl.ec.gc.ca/udo/office/office.html>