

NORTH CAROLINA

State Agency Purchases of Recycled Products and Source Reduction, Recycling, and Composting Efforts

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Fourteenth Annual Report

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DPPEA would like to thank the agencies that diligently submit their reports to our office each year. Your hard work and dedication is very appreciated.



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The Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance provides free, non-regulatory technical assistance and training on methods to eliminate, reduce or recycle wastes before they become pollutants or require disposal. Contact DPPEA for more information about this document or waste reduction.

0 copies of this public document were printed in an effort to conserve resources. The report can be viewed online at <http://www.p2pays.org/epp/stagencies.asp>. Hard copies are available upon request.

January 2009

Introduction

State agencies are directed to use products containing recycled materials by state law - N.C. General Statute 143-58.2(a), and by Executive Order. Executive Order 156 was signed in 1999 in support of N.C. Project Green, the state environmental sustainability initiative, and was an updating and strengthening of the original Executive Order, signed in 1993.¹ Purchasing recycled content and other environmentally preferable products improves recycling markets, reduces environmental impacts from waste, and saves energy and natural resources.

Many state agencies and local school districts help achieve these goals through thoughtful purchasing decisions and the use of recycled content products. These efforts are particularly critical right now, for economic as well as environmental reasons. Over 14,000 people are employed in the recycling industry in the state, and with our country's current economic crisis, the recycling industry has been impacted. The price of recycled commodities is suffering, but purchasing products made out of these materials has the potential to boost the value of recycled materials and help our recycling economies continue to succeed.

NC state government has continued to make progress toward environmental sustainability by offering recycled content and environmentally preferable products at affordable prices on state contract. Currently, over 25 products are available on term contract that exhibit some sort of environmentally preferable attribute, including recycled content, reduced packaging, and energy efficiency. Some recent additions include green cleaners and two convenience contracts for recycling electronics and fluorescent lights. State agencies and other entities that can buy from state term contracts (such as local governments) have an array of high quality, cost-effective recycled products available on term contract for purchase. The list of products can be seen at www.doa.state.nc.us/PandC/recycled.htm.

This document summarizes the efforts of state agencies to purchase recycled products. It fulfills the reporting mandate of N.C. General Statute 143-58.2(f) for fiscal year 2008. This year there was a slight decrease in reporting agencies, the majority of which were local school entities. All reporting was conducted online, saving paper and postage.

Departments	21
UNC Institutions	12
Community Colleges	42
Local Public School Units	66
Total (220)	141
Percent Reporting	64%

Office Paper	76% RC
Tissue and Towel	95% RC
Miscellaneous Paper	80% RC
Total Paper	83% RC
NonPaper Expenditures recycled content products	\$41.7 million
Toner	\$11 million
Trash/Recycling Cans	\$140,000
Carpet	\$5.6 million
Plastic Lumber	\$25 million
Office Supplies	\$70.1 million
Plumber	\$24.6 million
Recapped Tires	\$2.7 million

Fluctuations in data have stabilized somewhat, with small variations annually. As was true last year, numbers were greatly skewed due to the considerable purchasing activities of the Department of Corrections. DOC is responsible for buying large quantities of products. When its data is removed from the equation, comparisons varied relatively predictably, with some decreases, most likely due to spending constrictions and a decreased budget. For the purpose of drawing comparisons between the other agencies, DOC commodity data was extrapolated and is highlighted in Figure 2, revealing a remarkable increase in recycled content paper purchases. DOC's total recycled content purchases increased 39 percent from last year, mostly in the category of paper. Data from a few nonpaper categories, such as rerefined motor oil, office supplies, and recapped tires, were not included this year. DOC expenditures made up 79 percent of all nonpaper products and 95 percent of all paper purchases reported.

¹ Full text of No. 156 is available online at www.p2pays.org/epp/reports.asp.

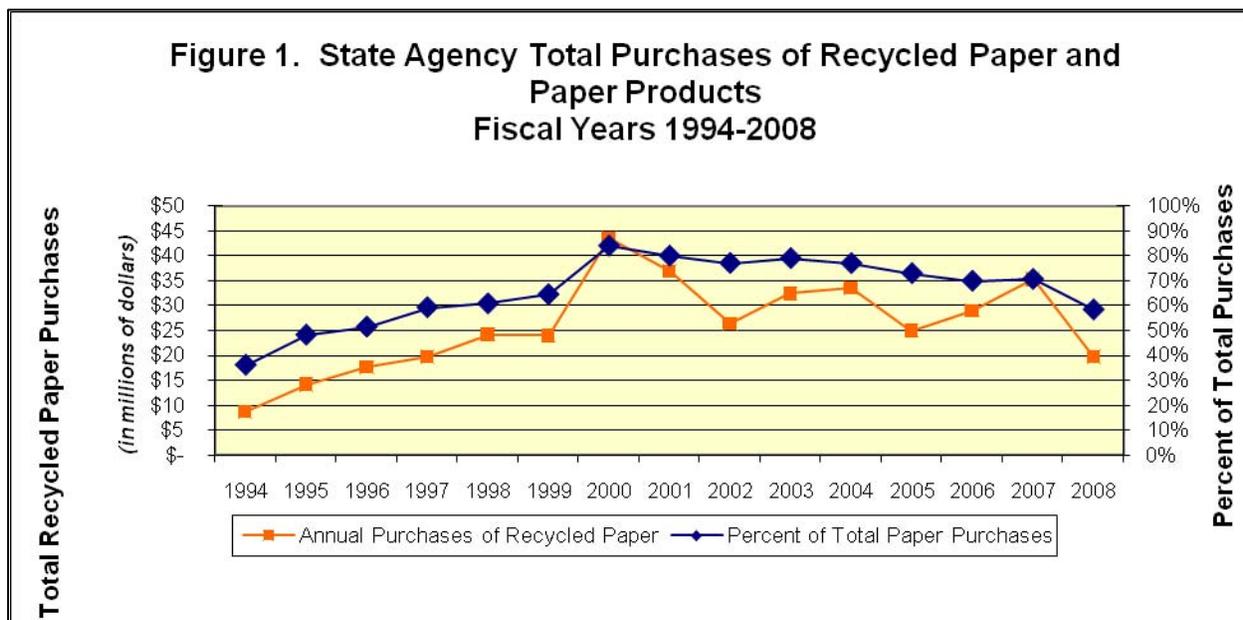
Purchases of Recycled Products

Paper and Paper Products. This is the seventh year in which agencies failed to meet the goal set forth by Executive Order 156; that, as of FY 2000-01, 100 percent of the total dollar value of expenditures for paper and paper products be toward purchases of paper and paper products with recycled content.

The percentage of recycled content paper purchases reached an all-time high of 84 percent in 2000, and has since fluctuated in the 70s. **This year, agencies achieved an 82 percent for recycled content paper purchases, achieving a new level of success.** Still, virgin paper continues to be available on state contract at a lower price, which is a notable obstacle in reaching statewide goals. Seeking more vendors of recycled content paper and implementing waste reduction techniques, such as double-sided printing and reusing one-sided pages, could help neutralize this cost.

Below, **Chart 1** illustrates the trend in overall dollar amounts and percentages of recycled paper purchases over the past 15 fiscal years, including this year's decrease in all categories of paper expenditures. Recycled content paper purchases totaled \$19.7 million, which represents 58 percent of all paper purchases, a little more than 10 percent less than last year. The data indicates a need to enhance efforts to achieve the 100 percent goal across all agencies, which is incorporated in the **Recommendations** section below.

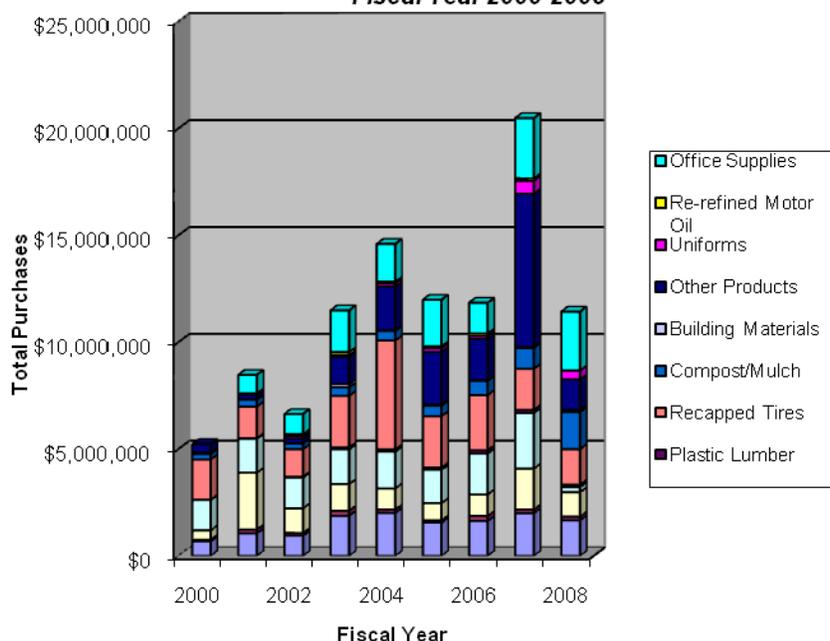
- Half the paper purchases were spent on office paper, achieving a 55% rate for recycled content office paper.
- 17 agencies reached 100% goal for all paper purchases, which has been relatively consistent over the past 10 years.
- More than 1/3 of the agencies achieved a stellar 90% or higher rate of recycled content purchases for paper.
- Only 19% of reporting agencies purchased all office paper with recycled content.
- Half of the agencies purchased all recycled content towel and tissue products, achieving an overall recycled content purchase rate of 83%.
- \$10.7 million was spent on outside print orders, decreasing more than 1/4 from last year, 60% of which was recycled content.



Policy and Administrative Support. While agencies are not required to develop an internal policy by the General Statutes or Executive Order, it could be the first step to improving our state’s effectiveness in recycled content product purchases. A mere 48 percent report having a buy recycled policy or goal in place, which is consistent with the last four years. Agencies are specifically charged with the responsibility of purchasing recycled content products, as well as designating a lead coordinator, which less than half have reported accomplishing. Agencies are also reporting that fewer administrators are communicating the importance of green purchasing. These are key components to a successful recycled content procurement program, and should be examined as a way to considerably increase participation.

Non-Paper Products. Agencies reported spending \$11.4 million on non-paper recycled content products in fiscal year 2008, half of last year’s expenditures, following this year’s trend of decreased overall spending. Non-paper recycled product spending is expected to increase continually as purchasers become further educated about the products they buy, and as the array of recycled products become more readily available.

**Chart 2. State Agency Purchases of Non-Paper Recycled Products
Fiscal Year 2000-2008**



Total expenditures of the recycled non-paper products reflect a drop from FY 07’s very high figure but are very consistent with previous years, as illustrated in **Chart 2**. The size of the colored categories represent the total dollars of purchases in that category and the height in that fiscal year represents total purchases of non-paper recycled products. Reports revealed minor fluctuations in most categories; exceptions include building materials and ‘other’. The “other” category includes furniture, animal bedding, outdoor equipment, and housekeeping supplies. Decreased purchases for construction can be attributed to the state-wide budget crisis.

Other Environmental

Purchasing Efforts. Some state agencies have excelled beyond buying recycled, and have begun to tackle more sustainable purchasing issues like environmentally preferable purchasing. Environmentally preferable purchasing, or green purchasing, includes a host of attributes that can be considered to decrease the impact of products on the environment. Carteret Community College just started a sustainability program, which will include environmentally preferable purchasing efforts. Cumberland County Schools purchased its first hybrid car, and intends to budget hybrids for future vehicular purchases. Several agencies have reported procuring energy efficient lighting figures, including florescent bulbs and low-mercury fluorescent tubes.

Other environmentally preferable purchasing successes in state government this year include continued dialogue between some of the DOA Purchase and Contract engineers and DPPEA to revise product specifications where possible. Most notably, agencies are working together to make it easier to identify green products via a change in the commodity codes, which are procurement numbers that represent a product or service.

Conclusion

The purchase of recycled content products is a well-established practice in state government, supported by statutory and executive order requirements, as well as the possibility of using government purchasing power to establish state term contracts that offer high quality, affordable recycled content choices for purchasers. Still, progress must be made to bring agencies to full compliance with the 100 percent recycled content paper goal.

Several key agencies could, with a few significant purchasing decisions, substantially increase the overall performance of state government in recycled paper purchasing. Converting the current \$125.3 million in virgin paper purchases to recycled paper will allow North Carolina state government to contribute largely to the strength of recycling markets. As a major player in the collection of paper for recycling, state government stands to benefit directly from improved markets. The use of recycled products will also help North Carolina achieve its environmental goals by reducing natural resource, energy and water usage, and preventing air and water pollution.

The following recommendations may help state government meet goals set forth both in EO 156 and General Statutes, and increase overall recycled content purchases. In regard to previous recommendations, DPPEA worked on reinvigorating NC Project Green via a revitalization of the website and communication with former participants. More particularly, training sessions were conducted for a few purchasing organizations, including department purchasers and local school unit procurement professionals. DPPEA made continual efforts in the Carolina Recycling Association's Collegiate Conference and other meetings, where higher education schools met to discuss recycling, purchasing, and sustainability efforts.

Recommendations

- I. Because of the consistency of agency performance in the last 10 years and the alternative possible use of staff resources to conduct active environmentally preferable purchasing technical assistance, the statutory reporting requirement for recycled content purchasing should be rescinded.** As discussed in the introduction of this report, continued goals for purchasing recycled content and other environmentally preferable products is important to our local economy and the success of our recycling businesses. Unfortunately, reporting on this data is very difficult because these products do not have special commodity codes identifying that they are 'green' products. DOA's Purchase and Contracts Division has the best access to what agencies are buying on state contract, and they report that data each year to be included in this State Solid Waste Management Annual Report. That continued effort will help the state keep a handle on recycled content purchases, while DPPEA maintains outreach and education efforts and assists DOA with populating state contracts with more environmentally preferable products.
 - II. NC Procurement Professionals should communicate their interest in procuring green products to DOA's Purchase and Contracts Division.** Educational sessions reveal that government-purchasing professionals are interested in increased green product choices available on contract. While some university purchasing offices have management support and are interested in developing specifications and policies, most can not dedicate time to designing internal green policies or searching for environmentally preferable purchasing contract language and would be interested in utilizing pre-negotiated state contracts. They also need assistance justifying price differentials for more durable and healthier products.
 - Evaluate products in terms of broad environmental impacts including: durability, energy efficiency, performance, recycled content and recyclability, toxicity, biodegradability, local manufacturers, and packaging.
 - Engage P&C regarding products and contractual services that take into account environmental impacts.
-

Agencies that Purchased 100 Percent Recycled Paper in FY 08

Alexander County Schools	Pamlico County Schools
Asheboro City Schools	Perquimans County Schools
Auditor, Office of State	Randolph Community College
Central Carolina Community College	Stokes County Schools
Currituck County Board of Education	Surry Community College
Davidson County Schools	UNC Greensboro
Fayetteville Tech Community College	Wilson Community College
Madison County Schools	Yadkin County Schools
NC School of the Arts	

Agencies that Failed to Report Data for FY 08

Alamance Community College	Lieutenant Governor's Office
Alleghany County Board of Education	Lincoln County Schools
Avery County Schools	Mayland Community College
Beaufort County Schools	McDowell County Schools
Bertie County Schools	McDowell Technical Community College
Bladen Community College	Mitchell County Schools
Cabarrus County Schools	Mooresville Graded School District
Caldwell County Schools	NC Real Estate Commission
Carteret County Schools	NC School of Science & Mathematics
Catawba County Schools	NC State University
Cherokee County Schools	Office of Information Technology Services
Clay County Board of Education	Orange County Schools
Clinton City Schools	Pasquotank County Schools
Coastal Carolina Community College	Pembroke State University
Columbus County Schools	Pender County Schools
Craven County Schools	Pitt County Schools
Dare County Schools	Roanoke-Chowan Community College
Durham Technical Community College	Robeson Community College
Edgecombe County Schools	Robeson County Public Schools
Elkin City Schools	Rockingham County Schools
Employment Security Commission	Rowan-Cabbarus Community College
Environment and Natural Resources, Dept. of	Shelby City Schools
Fayetteville State University	South Piedmont Community College
Franklin County Schools	Southeastern Community College
Gaston College	Stanly Community College
General Assembly	Swain County Schools
Guilford County Schools	Thomasville City Schools
Halifax County Schools	UNC Hospitals
Harnett County Schools	Union County Public Schools
Henderson County Public Schools	Warren County Schools
Hertford County Schools	Washington County Board of Education
Hickory Public Schools	Wayne County Public Schools
Hoke County Board of Education	Western Piedmont Community College
Hyde County Board of Education	Whiteville City Schools
Jackson County Public Schools	Wilkes Community College
Johnston County Schools	Wilkes County Schools
Kings Mountain District Schools	Yancey County Schools
Lenoir County Public Schools	

State Agency Source Reduction, Recycling, and Composting Efforts

State agencies are directed to recycle by state law - N.C. General Statute 143 and by Executive Order 156. The Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance suspended reporting for a few years, but in 2005 started a new baseline for state recycling trends and participation has increased annually. Sixty-one agencies reported data, which constitutes over sixty percent of the required reporting entities. Universities and community colleges are heavily represented, accounting for 50 reports.

Agency departments pose a difficult challenge in reporting because they often have several regional offices to gather data from, and many work in leased facilities or share buildings with non-state businesses. Departments make up 25 percent of the required reports. More than twice as many state employees work in regional offices across the state than in the Capital area. In FY08, eleven agency departments reported, but 3 of them filed very incomplete reports without any tonnages or cost data. The Department of Transportation filed a complete report, and a complete summary of its solid waste and recycling program is included in this State Solid Waste Management Annual Report.

The majority of agency offices located in the Raleigh-area are included under one contract for recycling and solid waste collection, managed by the Department of Administration's Facilities Management Division. Facilities Management gathers data from the collection companies and completes this report for agencies in the capital region.

Recycling Performance. In fiscal year 2008, state agencies collectively diverted 1,269,951 tons from disposal in landfills and incinerators. Respondents reported recycling 14,205 tons of paper, 4,351 tons of metals, 71 tons of glass, 96 tons of plastic, 26,219 of commingled containers, 22,212 tons of organics, and 1,202,525 tons of 'other' materials. The 'other' category consists of materials such as lead-acid batteries, textiles/fabrics, motor oil, tires, and asphalt. The commingled containers category was added last year because expanding markets across the state are able to handle mixed materials. This development is a great improvement, as simple programs have the highest participation rate.

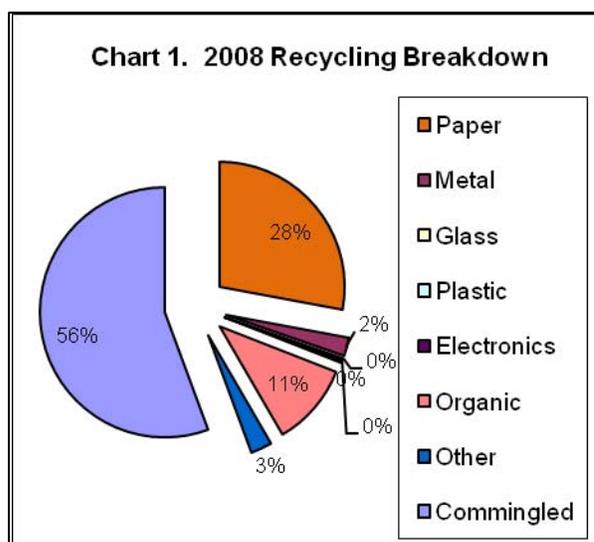


Figure 1 demonstrates this data, excluding the Department of Transportation's data. In order to draw some conclusions and demonstrate a few comparisons in this year's report, DOT's data is not included in the charts and overall recycling rate for the state. If included, DOT recycling tonnages would amount to 96 percent of all recycling data reported. DOT's data and activities are reported in a separate section in this State Solid Waste Annual Report which demonstrates a remarkable 97 percent recycling rate.

Figure 1. Recycling Tonnages for the Department of Transportation	
Material	Tons
Paper	13,160
Metal	1,122
Glass	58
Plastic	81
Commingled	26,219
Electronics	150
Organics	5,049
Other	1,295
Total Tons Recycled	47,133
Recycling Rate	52%

Based on FY 2008 data, the agency recycling rate for all wastes managed during the year was 52 percent. This is a 9 percent increase from the 2007 report. Paper, metal, and tonnages fell while glass, plastic, organics, and 'other' tonnages increased. Commingled tonnages increased significantly while electronics tonnages decreased to a small fraction of last year's reporting data. Electronics recycling tonnages were probably high last year because some agencies were storing surplus equipment, not sure what to do with it. Last year, a convenience contract was initiated and agencies were educated about recycling options for electronics.

This data is extremely variable, and drawing comparisons is difficult because reporting behaviors are not consistent year to year. Eight more agencies reported this year, and the data represented comes from varying agencies each year, so reporting is inconsistent. Also, eight agencies reported recycling tonnages but did not include solid waste tonnages.

Data was collected for electronics recycling for the fourth year in a row. Encouragingly, the majority of agencies has a process in place to manage excess electronics, and in FY 2008 collected 273 tons of electronics. This does not include data from DOA or the State Surplus Office. Most agencies report using the statewide electronics-recycling contract (www.doa.state.nc.us/PandC/926a.htm) to compliment recycling through state surplus. A handful of agencies reported working with other vendors, all of which are listed in our online directory at www.p2pays.org/dmrm. A few claim to work in conjunction with their local government to dispose of electronics and one or two donated to local schools. Agencies and local governments are becoming keenly aware of the need to recycle electronic materials, bearing in mind their contribution of hazardous substances to landfills and the opportunity to reclaim valuable resources from electronic products.

Solid Waste and Program Costs. State agencies (including DOT) landfilled approximately 85,056 tons of solid waste in FY 2008, at a cost of about \$12.2 million in collection and disposal fees. The average estimated cost was of \$240 per ton. This falls short of the 134,599 tons reported in 1999 costing \$11.75 million, and represents an 18 percent decrease from last year. Some of the large waste producers did not report this year, and some agencies, such as Central Piedmont Community College, experienced a substantial decrease in solid waste tonnages. The overall disposal costs went up by over \$4.6 million dollars from last year, and the cost per ton increased by about \$75. This number is extremely fickle depending on how complete and accurate the agency reports are.

Calculating the total cost of solid waste and recycling programs is difficult, and respondents may need training to review this computation. Additional calculations have been included to more accurately compute the expense of recycling programs. In order to determine the true cost or cost avoided, agencies must submit complete reports. The reliability of this data also depends on how in-depth the reporting agencies examine their program fees.

Agencies are asked to report the cost avoided through recycling, calculated by multiplying the recycling tonnage by the cost per ton of solid waste. While most appeared to do this from the data, some agencies reported tremendous differences in their cost avoided through recycling. Those discrepancies were either miscalculations or took into consideration other costs of the program that were not supplied in the report. From the data agencies reported, the total cost avoided is estimated over \$51 million, an astounding increase from last year.

While nearly half of the reports claim some revenues for the sale of recyclables, amounting to almost \$1.5 million, the majority still experienced net program costs totally nearly \$3.5 million. Program costs include collection, processing, and outreach and education. **The result is an average cost of almost \$3 per ton of recyclables, a small fraction of the cost for solid waste disposal**, which exemplifies the savings in recycling. It should be noted that 18 agencies did not include recycling program costs although they did report recycling tonnages. Recycling programs should not have the expectation of zero cost, but can expect that there will be an overall savings by avoiding the higher disposal fees of solid waste. As with most new programs and efforts, there is an upfront cost for containers and initial education, and minimal costs to continue marketing the program.

With the economic downturn, recycling commodity prices also declined dramatically starting in October 2008. Some programs may not continue to receive revenues for the sale of their materials, and some may experience increased recycling collection costs in 2009. State agencies can assist our local markets by continuing to improve recycling programs and through an increased effort in buying recycled content products. Some of those state efforts are included in this report as well.

Administrative Support and Source Reduction. A clear majority of agencies report that they receive top-down administrative support for recycling efforts, and over half have a lead coordinator for waste

reduction and recycling program. Forty-six percent have a waste reduction program, and an equal portion have ongoing educational programs for waste reduction and recycling. Most agencies that routinely host the public at their facilities, such as state parks, highway rest areas, museums, and sports venues, provide recycling opportunities for visitors. Some agencies detailed that limited training is provided but could be improved if upper tier administrative support is gained. Information was generally communicated and distributed via:

- ✓ Employee email, newspaper, radio, word of mouth and one-on-one education at campus events where promotional items are distributed.
- ✓ Website, brochures, student groups, volunteers and volunteer activities.
- ✓ Presentations at training sessions and managers meetings, as well as annual reports.
- ✓ Recycling policies and procedures listed in materials such as Employee Manuals, printed on campus phone directories, given to residence hall staff, and posted online.
- ✓ Posters and signs in break rooms, recycling centers, hallways, and restrooms.

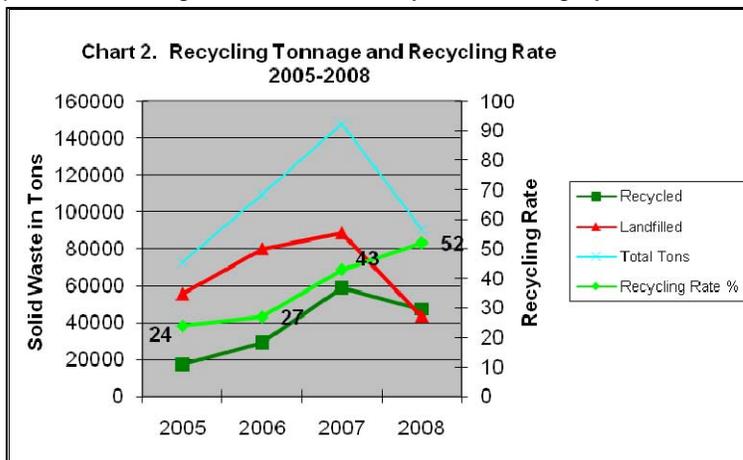
Ninety-two percent of state agencies practice waste reduction at the source, including reducing office paper by eliminating unnecessary reports and forms or converted to electronic format, making fewer copies, double sided printing, using email and voice mail to communicate, and posting announcements on bulletin boards or in break areas. Agencies estimate a reduction in paper usage in fiscal year 2008. A quarter of agencies conducted solid waste assessments of the amount and types of solid waste at its facilities. Some use this reporting process to reevaluate their program. Other agencies conduct site visits, collect landfill invoices, or audit on-site trash dumpsters. The results help in finding the best place to put recycling containers, deciphering which materials are most feasible to recycle, and identifying where waste reduction techniques would be most efficient.

Conclusion

While the revitalization of the recycling report has shown a great percentage of agencies continuing their waste reduction and recycling efforts that were established several years ago, there are still challenges. Some agencies, including community colleges and a few universities, are struggling to recycle basic material like cardboard and aluminum cans. Sometimes this is a market issue. More often, it is a perceived barrier due to lack of education and funding, which stems from insufficient support internally.

Inconsistencies and inaccurate reports are still a problem, making finite conclusions complicated. For instance, a variable set of agencies report each year and there is missing data in many reports. In addition, many departments neglect to report for their regional offices. This year the integrity of the data improved with updates to the report form.

Some of the variability in statistics can be attributed to the inability of agencies to accurately track tonnages. Solid waste and recycling weights are still estimated because collection companies have not integrated onboard truck scales. Exact weights can only be obtained if collection is completed at one facility and the truck is brought across scales to obtain an exact weight, which rarely occurs for some agencies that collect their own materials. For these reasons, figures reported likely underestimate the true quantities and costs of waste being disposed.



Incomplete tracking and estimation may also contribute to fluctuations in reported recycling over time.

The unreliability of the data prevents the natural and hopeful conclusion that increased recycling tonnages would cause a decrease in solid waste being disposed of in the state's landfills. Excluding DOT's data, this year's recycling tonnage actually decreased by 20 percent from last year. Concurrently,

the solid waste tonnages reported also decreased – by 50 percent! **Therefore, this year's recycling rate is 52 percent, a 9 percent improvement from 2007.** This estimates that agencies are recycling nearly half of their solid waste, and reports indicate they may have achieved some waste reduction through their efforts. Improved awareness of agency solid waste streams and more accurate data collection will make a more reliable comparison possible.

It is encouraging that some agencies have pulled forward as leaders in waste reduction and recycling efforts. Many universities provide reuse programs including large-scale collection and redistribution of clothing, furniture, household supplies, and even electronic products. A few universities have conducted sustainability audits over the last year or two, which include energy and water tracking mechanisms as well as waste audits of the campus. With the re-establishment of the recycling report, some community colleges and universities reached out for assistance to restart or revitalize their program.

DPPEA has outreach and education campaigns available to all universities and community colleges to help promote recycling programs. In FY 2008, many schools took advantage of the RE3 campaign, utilizing posters and commercials on campus. At annual outreach events from job festivals to Earth Day celebrations, campus coordinators gave out promotional materials to encourage students to visit www.re3.org to learn more about recycling. DPPEA developed new materials to continue promoting the program, including online resources such as a web-blog, new commercials, and more promotional materials, which were all well received and enhanced the efforts of RE3.

Recommendations

Upon review and consideration of the data contained in this report, DPPEA submits the following recommendations to improve the solid waste reduction and recycling efforts of North Carolina state agencies.

- I. Use the Source Reduction and Recycling Report Data to Assist Programs Statewide. Tracking the amounts of solid waste disposed annually by state agencies is the best way to determine whether efforts to reduce waste, including recycling programs, are affecting the waste stream. This information, along with data on the costs for collection and disposal, can be used to evaluate the cost efficacy of agencies' waste management strategies, as well as the costs avoided through waste reduction and recycling. To maximize data recovery and assessment, it is recommended that agencies:
 - Conduct waste assessments at their constituent facilities, offices, and institutions.
 - Require full accounting for all costs associated with solid waste collection and disposal services.
 - II. Develop a means to effectively communicate about recycling programs. Programs are ineffective if they are not visible and not explained to employees. This may be as simple as quarterly email reminders of what is accepted at the various bins in your facility, and where the bins are located (i.e. by the copy machine, in the staff lounge, in the lobby, etc.). Depending on the work environment, such efforts may include a full-fledged outreach and education program. Agencies should make use of materials available for promotional initiatives from DPPEA, including posters, stickers, and other advertising tools through the RE3 program at www.re3.org.
 - III. Agencies should join NC Project Green (www.ncprojectgreen.com), which is a reinvigorated effort focusing on sustainability in government. The audience for the project is state agencies and local governments. Universities and community colleges should consider joining Project Green, as well as the Carolina Recycling Association's Collegiate Recycling Coalition (www.cra-recycle.org/CRC). From these two programs, participants will be educated about recycling markets and how to set up a successful recycling program. Respondents may need training to review how to calculate some of this report data, and these programs can help, along with some direct training from DPPEA.
-