

Environmental Suggestions for Large Events

at churches, community halls, scout troops, etc.

- ★ Ideal scenario
- ✓ Next best scenario
- ⊗ Avoid

1. Event planning - educating your team

- ★ Encourage the organizing team members to view the event as an opportunity for ...
 - Right action: being more respectful of the earth in your actions as a group
 - Outreach: being a living and working example of earth-friendly practices
 - Education: illustrating earth-friendly practices for participants to experience and copy in other areas of their lives
- ★ Consider starting with one track on this list. Add one additional track with each of your group's subsequent events.

2. Event planning - transportation

- ★ Choose a central location for your meeting site and encourage participants to walk, bike, use mass-transit.
- ★ Consider offering acknowledgement, awards, or prizes for greenest transportation practices.
- ✓ In publicity materials, encourage participants to carpool to the event. Encourage them to fill each vehicle with attendees, and to use the lowest mpg vehicle available to them.
- ⊗ Avoid single occupant vehicles. Also discourage "drop off" of a single attendee by a lone driver, which is often the same thing.
- ⊗ Avoid requiring airflight, particularly for trips less than 500 miles.

3. Event Publicity

- ★ Print fliers on recycled paper (highest possible post-consumer %). Give careful consideration to how many copies are printed, to avoid excess and waste.
- ★ Lay out your flier in a paper-conserving format. Try a half sheet, if possible, so that two fliers can be produced from one sheet of 8.5 x 11. Use both sides of each sheet.
- ★ Publicity should include a mention of items requiring action from participant. (See items 2,7,8)
- ★ Consider publicizing the environmental steps you are taking: "This flier was printed on recycled paper." "This will be a zero-waste event."
- ⊗ Avoid printing fliers and pamphlets on heavy glossy nonrecycled stock as this is one of the most costly papers to our environment.
- ⊗ Avoid printing fliers on neon colored or deep colored stock as this is challenging to recycle.

4. Site Arrangement

- ★ Put reusable items like cloth towels within easy accessibility. Place single-use items (like paper towels) in less convenient places.
- ★ Provide multiple cans at each "trash can" location: a large recycle bin, a small general trash bin. If your site has composting capabilities, provide a small composting container too. Label each for desired contents.

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- ★ Trash cans can be rinsed. If washable watertight cans are used, single-use plastic trash bag liners are unnecessary. If your site has composting capabilities, rinse water can be poured onto the compost pile (particularly in drought areas).
- ★ Have composting and recycling capabilities onsite. Failing these, designate a member of your organization who will cart these items home for proper (non-landfill) disposal.
- ★ Declare your site a “Styro-free zone”
- ★ In restrooms, stock toilet paper made from 100% recycled fiber.
- ★ Choose biodegradable soap and cleansers.

5. Décor

- ★ Choose reusable cloth rather than single-use tablecoverings. Perhaps the site owns some. Perhaps these are borrowed from the organizing team.
- ★ Use reusable or functional items for décor. Example: fresh potted culinary herbs which are subsequently used or planted by a participant or organizing team member.
- ★ Use a small vase of fresh flowers, locally grown on-site.
- ✓ If you use fresh flowers, seek local flowers to reduce transportation impact. Or, choose VeriFlora certified sustainably grown flowers or Fair Trade certified flowers. Give the flowers away after the event and encourage the end recipient to compost the flowers when they fade.
- ⊗ Avoid Styrofoam, mylar, and mixed-materials décor items.
- ⊗ Avoid single-use décor items which are immediately trashed after the event. Example: single-use tablecloths, streamers, single-use banners.
- ⊗ Avoid electricity-intensive décor. Example: copious lighting.

6. Meeting

- ★ Encourage low-tech presentations with reusable displays
- ★ Go “paper free.” Skip the single-use “agenda” handout which is discarded after one session. Display the agenda on a low-tech chalkboard or white board.
- ★ “Hand out” resources online: Prior to the meeting set up a webpage listing the needed resources. After the meeting, update it with any additional resources. Display the page address at the meeting in low-tech format, in lieu of giving out handouts.
- ★ For “craft” events, encourage use of craft items made from recycled materials, reuse of materials, and wise use of resources (small quantity consumed). Recycle any scraps which are not reusable.
- ✓ Go “paper lite.” Rather than a stack of handouts, provide a single small (half sheet) page with single line references to the webpages of resources and vendors.
- ⊗ Avoid excessive electricity consumption such as high-intensity spotlights, excessive TV screens, computer monitors, AV control panels. Turn items off (unplug) when not in use.

7. Food Service - food

- ★ For potlucks or for food cooked on the site, encourage use of local in-season ingredients. Discourage use of imported food items.
- ★ Serve locally-produced beverages, such as homemade juice from local fruit.
- ✓ Purchase from local businesses. Select the most local items possible from businesses where food is labeled with geographical source.

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- ✓ Switch to fair-trade, shade-grown, organic coffee and sustainably grown herbal teas.
- ⊗ Avoid big box stores

8. Food Service - dishes, silverware, serving ware, napkins

- ★ Use reusable dishes, silverware, serving ware, cloth napkins, cloth dishtowels. If the site does not have these, perhaps borrow reusable items from members of your organization, or encourage people to bring their own. Scouts, consider telling participants to bring their own mess kits.
- ★ Rather than individual bottled waters, use glass glasses, ceramic mugs, reusable canteens, etc. and provide pitchers of filtered tap water.
- ★ Rather than single-use plastic wrap and foil, use pot lids and reusable covers. Example: on a buffet tray prior to arrival of the crowd, most food can simply be covered with a clean dishtowel.
- ✓ If you must use single-use items, choose goods which can be recycled, or which were made from recycled materials.
- ⊗ Avoid "compostable" plastics.
- ⊗ Avoid reuse of single-use plastic bottles.
- ⊗ Avoid Styrofoam and #6 polystyrene (check those plastic drink cups!).

9. Cleanup - "trash"

- ★ First, seek to "reduce" using suggestions at #8, above.
- ★ Provide multiple waste disposal containers in a sorting station with labels:
 - 1st stop in lineup: "Compost." Provide a bowl for participants to scrape plates of vegetable matter.
 - 2nd stop in lineup: "Recycle." A bin for recyclables can be provided if appropriate.
 - 3rd stop in lineup: "Garbage." Collect meat, bones, and non-recyclables in a small garbage container. We often put an unhappy face ⊗ on this label.
 - 4th stop in lineup: "Dirty dishes." Provide a large basin (an industrial size soup kettle works, as does a keg-sized ice bucket) for collecting dishes. Silverware, cups and glasses might be separated as needed.
 - End of lineup: "Laundry." Provide a basket for cloth napkins. We generally put this one last so that participants can wipe their hands.
- ⊗ Avoid providing only one single bin for mass-dumping of commingled items.

10. Cleanup - water

- ★ Use water conservation practices.
- ★ If you hand-wash dishes, use a dishpan rather than leaving the water running. If you use a dishwasher, run full loads.
- ★ Use a broom rather than hosing down driveways and sidewalks.

"Environmental Suggestions for Large Events,"
together with reasons why and resources,
is available as a handout in PDF version at www.EnviroChangeMakers.org

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