

# FESTIVAL RECYCLING GUIDE



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### Introduction

Festivals generate an enormous amount of waste. Even “green” festivals generate aluminum cans, plastic bottles, food waste, paper towels, discarded clothing, broken chairs and tents, and the list goes on. All this waste must be hauled away and disposed of properly, so why not recover as much as possible to avoid burying it in the local landfill?

By reducing waste and recovering resources, we can reduce our impact on the environment and the local community. Be nice to your neighbors and clean up after yourself!

# MATERIALS

**Aluminum** — Used mostly for beer & soda cans. Cans can be easily crushed and are very lightweight when empty.

**Plastic** — Used mostly for water bottles and some soda and juice containers. Bottles are lightweight and generally safe, but caps must be removed, and liquids drained.

**Compost** — Not often collected, but a major percentage of your event waste.

**Cardboard** — A significant amount is generated, mostly by vendors. Ask vendors to flatten boxes and either drop off at a central collection point or leave in a stack (weighted down) to be collected by volunteers in the evening or early morning.

**Paper** — Not often collected, but some vendors will have paper waste. Event programs, schedules, etc. may also warrant paper recycling bins in key areas.

**Plastic Cups** — Cups often occupy unnecessary trash space. Stacking cups in a PVC pipe can free up trash space, reduce the frequency of trash collection, and allow cups to be recovered for recycling. Be sure to stack cups upside down to encourage emptying of liquids.

**NO GLASS** — Glass is heavy (bags get heavy and may tear if they become too full), can break and cause safety hazards, and is not accepted by most recycling businesses. It's best to avoid it whenever possible.



*Good intentions often drive people to leave non-recyclables near recycling bins in hopes that they will be recovered.*

# SEPARATION

## Why?

Separated bales always have a higher market value. If working with a local recycling business, ask how they would like materials separated.

Sorting recyclables later increases a business's costs.

Aluminum cans collect more quickly than plastic bottles. If separated, volunteers only need to empty one bin at each station instead of two.

Cans tend to produce a stronger odor than plastics due to the alcoholic or sugary contents.

Separation limits strong odors to bags containing cans.



*Aluminum cans collect more quickly than other materials*

# COLLECTION

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## Frequency

Send out volunteers every hour or so to remove full bags from bins and replace them with empty bags. Move full, tied bags out of the way to be picked up later. Instruct volunteers to carry a roll of clear bags so they can empty bins at any time during the festival.

## Draining Liquids

Reduce bag weight, biohazards, and odors by tearing a hole in the bottom of bags. This allows liquids to drain before they are tossed into a truck bed or onto a trailer.

## Vehicles

First decide on your method of collection (trailer, wheel barrow, etc.) and then select an appropriate vehicle to match your collection method. For small loads, a wheelbarrow, bike trailer, or pickup truck may be sufficient. Larger loads may require a large flatbed trailer pulled by a truck.

## Sorting

Despite people's best efforts, some sorting will likely be needed (especially in areas with less social pressure to follow proper procedures, such as campgrounds). Provide volunteers or staff with gloves and have them separate materials into piles for plastic, aluminum and trash.

## Consolidation & Storage

"Super sacks" are large woven bags, usually used previously for agricultural products and repurposed to hold recyclables. They have capacity to hold large volumes and are extremely strong. Empty super sacks are relatively lightweight and must be anchored somehow to prevent them from blowing away in a gust.

### **Possible sources:**

agriculture feed companies, seed companies.



*All materials are collected and stored at a central location*

# HAULING

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**It's easiest and safest to leave this to professionals. We recommend hiring a local recycling business for most events. However, consider the following if you choose to manage the materials yourself.**

## Equipment

You will likely need a trailer to hold all the recyclables and a truck equipped to safely pull it.

## Baling

Depending on the volume of materials collected and available sources of electricity, it may be best to bale materials as they are collected. If not, locate a baler to compact materials after the event in preparation for hauling.

## Broker

You'll need someone to buy your materials or a location where you can stockpile everything until you find a buyer.



*Recyclables are stored in separate supersacks on the trailer. Trash is stored in dumpsters.*



# VOLUNTEERS

## Recruitment

Advertise to businesses and organizations with environmental missions - some encourage outside volunteer work.

Include your advertisement with event publications and digital media

Returning volunteers are extremely valuable because they are familiar with the program, reliable, and recruit friends to volunteer.

Social media and email list-serves can be effective tools for recruiting new volunteers.

## Registration

Fill the shifts you need and allow volunteers to choose shifts that fit with their schedules by utilizing an online program such as SignUp Genius (<http://www.signupgenius.com/>) or something similar.



*Volunteers pick up recycling and trash at the end of a long night.*



*A volunteer changes out a full bag of recyclables*

Send out periodic updates and emails to remind volunteers of dates, times, responsibilities, and appreciation.

Provide maps, event literature, lodging information, schedules, etc. as soon as information becomes available.

## Benefits

Free admission is usually the minimum offered to volunteers.

- Food/Beverage vouchers
- Camping, if available.
- Souvenirs
- Warm fuzzies!

## Appreciation

Thank volunteers at every opportunity - they have a dirty job!

Publicly acknowledge your volunteers through stage announcements, digital media, and any other available methods.

## BIN TYPES

### Clearstream

**Portable:** Their wire frames collapse & are lightweight.

**Easy to set up:** Unfold the frame, install a bag, snap lid on top.

**Transparent:**

People can see into the clear bags and quickly know they are for recycling. This helps with separation and reduces contamination.



### Barrels

Regular trash-style barrels. Cut round holes in the lids for containers and choose blue or green for recycling.



### Toter-style

Bins with flip-lids and wheels are convenient, identifiable, and large. Downsides include cost and portability.



# BIN LOCATIONS

**Pair with trash** — Make recycling easy! By pairing recycling and trash bins, guests only must make one stop to discard their waste. An empty water bottle from one hand can be placed with recycling while a greasy paper napkin from the other hand can be placed in the trash.



*Keep trash, plastics, and aluminum separate.*

**Not at Toilets** — Contamination rates will be unusually high and possibly hazardous.

**Entrances/Exits** — Every guest passes these points, and many want to discard drink containers before leaving. Rules often prohibit guests from entering with outside beverage, so you'll need a receptacle for contraband.

**Food and beverage vendors** — This is where most waste materials are generated. Guests often finish one beverage while waiting in line for their next beverage, so place a recycling bin near every drink line.

**Campgrounds** — Festival-goers tend to bring supplies in single-serving or other portable containers that may be recyclable. Social pressure to recycle properly is lower in campgrounds because people don't feel as if they are being watched. This can increase contamination and overall messiness.



*Campgrounds can get messy, but you can still recover recyclable materials.*

# LIQUIDS & COMPOST

## Liquids

It is important to remove liquids from recycling bins to reduce weight of the bags and burden on volunteers, reduce contact with germs, and reduce odors.

Liquids intended for human consumption cause little harm to grass and exposed soil. Encourage guests to pour unfinished beverages onto a designated patch of ground. Pound a stake into the ground at your recycling station and attach a sign pointing down that directs liquids to that spot.

**Include:** Food scraps, paper napkins, paper towels and uncoated paper plates.



*A food vendor wanted customers to know that kitchen scraps were being composted.*

**Exclude:** Meat and dairy, which attract animals. Avoid lemons, which cause complications with decomposition. "Compostable" plastic cups, bowls, and utensils do not break down in most compost piles - they require intense heat only found at some commercial facilities.

Good signage is critical with compost to avoid trash such as utensils, cups, and straws.

## Compost

Much of a festival's waste is uneaten food scraps. First identify a composter that will accept your material.



# WASTE REDUCTION

**Reusable Cups** — Include a reusable cup with the purchase of beer or wine. Incentivize reuse by discounting refills.

**Draught Beer** — Using a draught system eliminates cans and bottles and encourages reuse of cups.

**Boxed Wine** — Although the bladders are not recyclable, the outer cardboard box can be recovered. Boxes are also a safer, lighter weight,

and more compact alternative to glass bottles.

**Potable Water on Tap** — Encourage guests to bring reusable water bottles and provide potable water. You may be able to connect to city water or bring a large tank with multiple spigots.



*A volunteer fills a cup with boxed wine.*



*A water tank mounted on a trailer is used to provide potable water for drinking and spray bottles.*

## EDUCATION

**Festival Literature** — In the festival's brochure, pamphlet, newspaper, etc. include a section on waste and recycling. Mention what types of recyclables will be collected and where. Note if guests should bring their own cups. Remember to acknowledge recycling volunteers and hauling businesses.

**Signs** — Clear, recognizable signs may be the most important piece of education. Be consistent with language and design. Be big, bright, and secure (wind can blow hard!).  
\*Images or actual examples help with separation of materials.

**Maps** — Plan in advance where your bins will be placed. Mark them on a map of the festival area and include in literature, on signs at your information booth, and give a printed copy to each volunteer.

**Announcements** — Throughout the event, make announcements to both ask people to recycle and thank them for doing a good job if all is going well. Thanking volunteers over the microphone also serves as a reminder for guests to recycle.

**Language** — Be consistent and strategic. Language such as "Landfill" rather than "Trash" can increase diversion.