

The 3 Rs of Waste Prevention

Less Judd, President
Green Boroughs, Inc
Adjunct Faculty Member, Continuing Education
B.M.C.C./CUNY

Are you looking for ways to be green while saving some green as well? Reduce, reuse and recycle are three distinct concepts which together comprise the 3 Rs of waste prevention. Practice the 3 Rs of waste prevention in your daily life and you will save money and help save the planet!

Since the closing of Fresh Kills Landfill in Staten Island, all of New York's garbage has been taken by truck to landfills and incinerators outside of the five boroughs of New York City. Truck-idling at waste transfer stations increases air pollution and asthma rates, which in New York's low-income neighborhoods are among the highest recorded in the country.

All of us need to take responsibility for the waste problem by learning about the 3 Rs of waste prevention and putting them into practice on a daily basis.

Reduce ó It's important to reduce our waste in general because everything we buy and use requires natural resources and has to be disposed of.

Ways to Reduce Waste:

1. Look for products with little or no packaging
2. Only purchase items you absolutely need
3. Purchase products with recycled materials
4. Reduce waste of energy and water
5. Take your name off junk mail lists and prevent an average of 41 pounds of waste for every household each year. Go to www.dmachoice.org

Reuse ó use things over and over rather than only once

Ways to Reuse:

1. Repair items rather than throw them away
2. Purchase items that can be used over and over again
3. Avoid purchasing items that are disposable
4. Donate used clothing and furniture to organizations that will sell these items for charitable purposes
5. Try to borrow, rent or purchase used items whenever possible. Try Craig's List and Freecycle.

Recycle ó recycling is a manufacturing process that breaks a product down to its raw materials and makes it into a new product.

In New York City, residents are required to recycle mixed paper, metal cans, metal pots and pans, glass bottles and jars, and plastic bottles and jars. Contrary to popular belief, the numbers on the bottom of many plastic containers mean nothing in New York City! The only plastic items accepted for recycling in New York City are plastic bottles and jars regardless of the numbers on the bottom of the container. Yogurt containers, take-out containers, or any other plastic containers are not accepted.

Other items can be recycled but are not part of the New York City recycling program. These include electronic waste, batteries, tires, textiles, etc. The New York City Department of Sanitation has special drop-off centers where you can recycle these items. For more information, go to www.nyc.gov/nycwasteless.

This article was written by Les Judd, President of Green Boroughs, a company that provides marketing, networking, and educational services to business owners and consumers in New York City's green sector. He also teaches the class "How to Live Sustainably in NYC" and "How to Start a Green Business". For more information, go to www.greenboroughs.com or call Les at 718-530-5074.