



OR Recycling Checklist

Starting and Maintaining an OR Recycling Program



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No matter where you work, you can launch a perioperative recycling program with these tips.



- Create a team of partners and a champion from each division**
Anesthesia team, nurses, scrub techs, PACU, environmental services, surgeons
- Make a business case**
Recycling can be an opportunity for a public relations campaign. For some places, it can even be [profitable](#) to recycle.
- Contact facilities waste management and environmental services**
Understand recycling vendor contracts & concerns for infection control. Where is the waste going?
- Identify hauling and recycling partner**
How does the waste stream look like leaving the hospital? Are they hand-sorted or machine sorted? Find a recycling vendor [here](#).
- Identify what can be recycled**
Paper, cardboard boxes, batteries, irrigation bottles, basins, Tyvek, basins, pitchers, trays, flexible clear packaging, single use devices, medications, etc.
- Categorize the types of waste**
Trash, paper, compostable, biohazard, hazardous, radioactive waste, etc.
Segregating waste can reduce disposing all trash in expensive regulated medical waste.
- Reduce waste before it's generated**
Only open items for immediate use.
Use reusable surgical gowns and laryngoscopes.
Reformulate surgical and anesthesia kits.
Keep the same patient monitors throughout the entire stay.
- Gather buy-in**
You need buy in from leadership, OR staff, anesthesiology, nursing, and environmental team members. Consider partnering with them.
- Logistics**
Determine where the recycling bins will be placed and who will collect the recycling trash. Make sure it is sustainable.
- Conduct PDSA cycles and gather input**
Conduct Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles and obtain feedback in a small area before spreading system-wide.
- Maintenance of the program**
Regularly educate new personnel. Post updated and consistent signs for sorting and recycling throughout the perioperative area.
- Maintain enthusiasm for recycling**
Do a waste audit. Track data and show how much waste was diverted or how much disposal costs were reduced. Reward those who did the best job.
- Anticipate roadblocks**
Contamination and infection control, increased time and effort for sorting, increased room turnover time, and no existing recycling processes for certain plastics.
- Resources for recycling**
[Environmental Impacts of Recycling](#)
[Greening the Operating Room](#)
[Implementing Successful Waste Management](#)
[Recycling Initiatives in the OR](#)
[Medical Plastic Recycling](#)
[6 Steps to Start a Hospital Recycling Program](#)
- Societies/groups for sustainability**
[Healthcare without Harm](#)
[Practice Greenhealth](#)
[CleanMed](#)
[ASA Subcommittee on Environmental Health](#)
[SPA Special Interest Group for Sustainability](#)