



Guidelines for Pledge Drives

The Green Routine Pledge was designed to help VA facilities galvanize staff support for a more sustainable workplace. This toolkit contains a suggested framework and resources to help GEMS coordinators and Energy Managers launch a pledge drive at a VA facility.

Why a pledge?

It's just human nature: we tend to take more seriously the promises that we make publicly. By signing an agreement to curtail energy use and/or increase recycling efforts, staff members are more likely to follow through on those intentions. A pledge drive is a great way to call attention across your facility to the need to improve our energy performance. Done correctly, it captures attention *and* gets results.

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1. The Green Routine Pledge

THE GREEN ROUTINE PLEDGE

Yes! I will:

- ✓ Turn off lights and monitors when not in use
- ✓ Recycle more at work and home
- ✓ Print double-sided at all times



Signature

Email Address

Print Name

Office Code

The above pledge was rolled at VA Central Office (VACO) during Energy Awareness Month 2010. It is designed to be printed 3-up on 8 ½ x 11, cover-weight recycled content paper.

The signature line is the essential component of the pledge, but you'll also want staff to print their name and provide contact information so that you can follow up with them later.

2. Customizing the Pledge for Your Facility

The simple action items listed above—turning off lights and monitors when not in use, recycling more at work and home, and printing double-sided at all times—were selected for their broad applicability. However, they may or may not be the best choices for your facility. Perhaps you want to focus the attention of staff at a medical facility on a particular recycling opportunity (blue wrap, for example) or focus on extinguishing a particularly wasteful behavior (for example, the practice of throwing clean, recyclable materials into a hazardous waste bin).

One size does not fit all. That's why we've provided the pledge electronically in a Word document that you can alter to fit the needs of your facility.

The best way to customize the pledge for your facility may already be obvious to you. Then again, you may find it helpful to poll key staff at your facility on what they've observed and where they think the best opportunities lie.

Follow these simple guidelines in establishing action items for your pledge:

- Make the action items broadly applicable across all staff levels and departments.¹
- Keep the language as simple, direct and concrete as possible.
- Focus on recycling, resource conservation and/or energy efficiency.
- Frame the action items in positive language (“recycle blue wrap,” not “stop throwing blue wrap in the hazardous waste bin”).
- Focus on goals for which you can and will provide necessary supports (for example, provide recycling bins in close proximity to waste bins).
- Include no more than 3 items.

When you’ve settled on a draft of action items for your facility, be sure to share them with select staff at your facility and get feedback (see 3.c. below).

Note the space for email address and office code. This information will be important when it comes time for pledge drive follow-up. Replace the “office code” language as needed to identify the office or department of the pledger.

3. Organizing a Pledge Drive

It takes a team to implement a successful pledge drive. Here’s an overview of the process.

- Identify a pledge drive team.** If your facility has a local green team, enlist them to help execute the pledge drive. If there’s no local green team, it’s time you created one! Tap staff from various departments who you know are interested in environmental issues and ask for their assistance. Depending on the size of your facility, the team should be between 6 and 20 staff members. Be sure to involve staff from your GEMS committee, facility energy engineers, and public affairs office, as they will be an important ally in promoting the pledge drive.
- Decide with your team when to roll out your pledge drive.** You can choose to roll it out during Energy Awareness Month, or you may opt for a later date to allow you more time to prepare. Here are a few guidelines on timing your pledge drive:
 - Allow at least a full week to collect pledges.
 - Tie your pledge drive to a significant event related to energy or recycling awareness. Energy Awareness Month is an obvious hook, but you might also

¹ What if there’s a unique opportunity to increase recycling or minimize waste within a single department? You may want to consider rolling out the pledge on a departmental level. It could serve as a pilot for your facility, with a broader pledge rollout at a later date built on lessons learned from your pilot.

consider starting (or ending) your pledge on America Recycles Day (November 15), or in January (on the theme of resolutions) or on Earth Day (April 22). Maybe there's a day significant to your facility because a new renewable technology is coming online. Be creative in framing your pledge drive.

- Avoid a timeframe where there are other high-profile events competing for staff attention.

C. Finalize the action items for your pledge.

Share your ideas for your pledge action items with your pledge drive team (see section 2 above.) Ask the group:

- Are these action items easy to understand?
- Is there any language here that would confuse you about the desired practice?
- Are these reasonable goals?
- Are the necessary supports in place to make these goals achievable?

Use this feedback to refine the action items and prepare the final version of your pledge.

D. Determine the delivery mechanism for your pledge.

A pledge drive can be successfully implemented either as a paper pledge drive, or an electronic one. There are advantages to each.

An electronic pledge is resource efficient in that it avoids the use of paper. It can quickly be placed in front of all staff who have access to a desktop computer. However, it requires IT resources that may be difficult to marshal within your stated timeframe. Consider bringing a member of your IT staff onto your pledge drive team to brief the group on the requirements for rolling out the pledge online and to determine if it's feasible at your facility.

A paper pledge may be easier to implement, as the art file has already been prepared for you. It's simply a matter of customizing the action items and then printing the pledge. We recommend a 3-pledge-per-page print run on cover-weight recycled content paper.

E. Determine the location for the pledge drive launch.

Whether your pledge is online or on paper, you'll want to make it visible to your staff. Where can you set up a display that will capture staff attention without getting in the way of facility visitors? It may be a break room or a lobby or the canteen. Determine where you can get the most exposure for your effort.

If yours is a paper pledge drive, you'll also need to determine where you can post the signed pledges. Pick a wall where they'll get attention. The more signed pledges are posted, the greater the visual impact, so set a high goal for staff participation. You may want to consider using a wall that is visible to your facility's guests, as it shows your staff's commitment to the careful use of resources. Enlist your facilities management office in the logistics of the pledge drive (Will the pledges be affixed directly to the wall? Is there a series of display boards that can be used for the effort? Will you use pins or tape? etc.)

F. Create a staffing plan.

Create a sign-up sheet for your pledge drive team to volunteer to carry out the pledge drive. Have them volunteer for 1 or 2 hour shifts to staff a pledge drive table to encourage staff members to sign. Perhaps you have a pledge drive location where there's no room for a table. In that case, arm staff members with clipboards, pledges and pens and set them loose.

Here are a few guidelines for your staffing plan:

- Allot time for the pledge drive every day for 5 consecutive days.
- For busy times and locations, request two volunteers to fill that slot.
- Ensure your schedule includes coverage of shift arrival times and lunch time.

G. Promote your pledge drive.

Work with your public affairs office to get the word out about your pledge drive beginning at least a week before it is scheduled. Be creative in building interest about the pledge drive; see the Appendix for resources. During pledge week, put up a sign to let staff know where and when they can sign the pledge. You might also work with your facility's director to request that department heads promote the pledge during their regular staff meetings.

4. Tips for Pledge Week

Here are a few tips for successful execution of your pledge drive.

- **Get support from the top.**
 - Get senior-level staff on board early with your effort. They can help you identify staff for your pledge team and also help signal the importance of the drive for the facility.

- The pledge offers a great opportunity for your facility leaders to lead by example. Encourage them to sign the pledge on the first day of the drive, and post their pledges prominently.
- **Prepare your pledge team.**
 - They should have a thorough understanding of the action items on the pledge and be prepared to answer questions about them. If any of the elements on the pledge represents a new practice for your facility, the pledge team should be able to quickly brief staff on compliance issues (e.g., “look for the new recycling bin at the nurse’s station”).
 - Make sure the team knows the final disposition of the pledges (see section 5) and can talk about how the drive fits into your facility’s ongoing outreach about sustainability.
 - Finally, get them pumped up! The pledge drive should be fun. Make sure they bring high energy and a smile to their outreach.
- **Build momentum.**
 - Post paper pledges edge-to-edge on a wall, and get them up as soon after they are signed as possible. This allows staff to see the growing momentum for the pledge as the week progresses.
 - Consider posting a thermometer poster with your goal for the number of pledges you are aiming to receive. Fill it in daily to track your progress toward the goal.
 - Send out facility-wide email updates daily to announce how many staff members have signed and encourage participation.

5. Follow Up: Getting the Most Out of Your Pledge Drive

When your pledge drive is over, the follow-up begins. Think about it. You’ve just collected contact information for a subset of your staff that is ready and willing to take a few extra steps to improve the sustainability of your facility. These are your allies in your ongoing effort to green your facility.

- **Create a listserv or email group.** Make sure everyone who signed a pledge and/or contributed to the success of the pledge drive is included in this list.
- **Email all staff who signed the pledge.** It’s time to thank staff for participating and to give them an early alert about the final results. Let them know how many people signed the pledge, and tell them you’ll be returning their pledge (if you had a paper-based pledge). Urge them to post the pledge in their workspace so it

- **Return the pledges to staff for posting in their work space.** You've removed the pledges from public display if you used paper pledges. Now it's time to route them back to the staff who signed them (either in staff mailboxes or as a hand-delivery) for posting in their work space, where they can be a prompt to encourage the targeted actions.
- **Send out a facility-wide message with the results of your pledge drive.** This is your chance to talk about how many staff participated in the pledge drive and the importance of efforts to green your facility. Be sure to thank everyone who contributed to its success.
- **Hold onto that email list.** You'll want to reach out to this group again for another sustainability related effort in the future. You may want to solicit volunteers for future greening efforts or establish a green committee to help drive future efforts.

6. Appendix: Resources for Promoting Your Pledge Drive

A. Sample email announcement

Modify underlined text as appropriate for your pledge drive.

Subject: Take the Green Routine Pledge!

Want to help make (facility name) a greener place to work? Take VA's Green Routine pledge! It only takes a minute, and it benefits us all.

Look for the pledge in (location) all week from (time) to (time), and from (time) to (time).

When all of us at VA improve our energy performance, it saves taxpayer dollars for the more important work of serving Veterans. It also reduces greenhouse gas emissions, protects the environment and natural resources, and contributes to our national security. Go green by stepping up your efforts to [turn off lights and monitors when not in use, recycling more, and always printing and copying double-sided].

Help us make a greener VA!

B. Sample email update during Pledge Week

Modify underlined text as appropriate for your pledge drive.

Subject: Join the movement! Take the Green Routine Pledge.

(number) pledges signed, and counting! If you haven't taken the Green Routine Pledge yet, don't miss your chance. Show your support for a greener VA by agreeing to take these small steps:

- Action item here
- Action item here
- Action Item here

Only (number) days left! Don't miss us in (location) all week from (time) to (time), and from (time) to (time).

Help us make a greener VA!

C. Sample email follow-up to pledge signers

Modify underlined text as appropriate for your pledge drive.

Subject: Thanks for helping make (facility name) a greener place!

By signing the Green Routine pledge, you've signaled your commitment to helping make (facility name) a top VA performer in sustainability. I want to thank you for that commitment, and to ask you to keep the message about a green workplace in front of your coworkers.

We'll soon be returning the pledge that you signed. ***Please post the pledge in your workspace in a place that's visible to all.*** Let it serve as an ongoing visual reminder to everyone about the importance of waste reduction and resource conservation.

You were one of (number) staffers who signed the pledge. Let's keep the momentum going! Please feel free to email me with your ideas for future efforts to keep (facility name) thinking—and acting—green.

D. Sample email follow-up facility-wide

Modify underlined text as appropriate for your pledge drive.

Subject: The (facility name) Green Routine Pledge

The dust has settled from our first Green Routine Pledge drive, and I'm happy to report that (number) staff members signed on to signal their commitment to make (facility name) a greener place by taking these small steps:

- Action item here
- Action item here
- Action Item here

A big thank you to all of you who signed and all who contributed to making this pledge drive a success!

Remember to take energy efficiency home, too. If every American home replaced just one incandescent light with a light that's earned the ENERGY STAR®, we would save enough energy to light 3 million homes for a year, save about \$600 million in annual energy costs, and prevent 9 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

Talk about small steps adding up!