

## WASTE PREVENTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This handbook establishes Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) waste prevention and recycling program procedures implementing the waste prevention and recycling policies contained in VA Directive 0063, Waste Prevention and Recycling Program, and VA Directive 0057, VA Environmental Management Program dated January 10, 2010.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook outlines the procedures, processes, and other key elements necessary to facilitate VA's continual improvement of management and performance with respect to waste prevention and recycling.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Assistant Secretary for Management (004), Office of Asset Enterprise Management (044), Green Management Program Service (044E).
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 0063, Waste Prevention and Recycling Program. VA Directive 0057, VA Environmental Management Program, dated January 10, 2010.
- 5. RECISSIONS:** None.

**CERTIFIED BY:**

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY  
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## WASTE PREVENTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

### 1. PURPOSE

a. The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is to fulfill President Lincoln's promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans. The goal of the Green Management Program Service within VA's Office of Asset Enterprise Management (OAEM) is to keep our promises to Veterans through a sustainable approach to operations that makes more resources available for Veterans' care. The purpose of this handbook is to establish VA program objectives, procedures and tools with respect to waste prevention and recycling in support of the mission and goal.

b. This handbook facilitates continual improvement of environmental compliance and optimization at VA through robust environmental management systems (EMS). All facilities are required to be covered by EMS. All EMSs shall be ISO 14001 compliant in accordance with VA Directive 0057, VA Environmental Management Program and VA Directive 0064, Environmental Management System Policy.

c. This guidance is provided to assist Administrations and staff offices in implementing the waste prevention and recycling aspects of VA Directive 0063, Waste Prevention and Recycling Program, which states it is VA policy to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials and waste, and to maintain life-cycle cost-effective waste prevention and recycling programs to the maximum extent practicable. It is designed to help Administrations and staff offices develop uniform, effective internal procedures.

### 2. SCOPE

The provisions of this handbook apply to all Administrations and staff offices, including those located in leased space. Each Administration and staff office shall ensure that all subordinate organizations are aware of and comply with this handbook.

### 3. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

a. The roles and responsibilities of the Administrations and staff offices as they relate to the objectives of waste prevention and recycling are defined in VA Directive 0063.

**b. Source Reduction**

Source reduction is the most important approach for meeting waste prevention and recycling goals. VA can reduce the amount of both hazardous and non-hazardous solid waste being generated and discarded by minimizing the amount and toxicity of materials purchased, altering how products and materials are used, and reusing materials. Specific requirements of source reduction shall include buying; the minimum required quantities, products with reduced packaging, reusable and recyclable products and materials, and products with conservation features, such as duplex-enabled photocopiers and printers. The requirements for green purchasing are found in law, regulation, and executive orders and are detailed in Green Purchasing guidance documents, VA Directive and VA Handbook 0058.

**c. Diversion**

After source reduction, diversion from waste disposal is the next most effective method of meeting waste prevention and recycling goals. Executive Order 13514 requires Federal agencies to eliminate waste by:

(1) Diverting at least 50 percent of non-hazardous solid waste, excluding construction and demolition debris, by the end of fiscal year 2015; and

(2) Diverting at least 50 percent of construction and demolition (C&D) materials and debris by the end of fiscal year 2015.

**d. Recycling Requirements**

(1) Paper. VA recognizes that paper markets and paper recycling opportunities vary by region. VA facilities shall collect and recycle paper that is not otherwise regulated (e.g., containing infectious wastes, or documents with personally identifiable information) and that is acceptable to a cost-effective recycler.

(2) Electronics. Used electronics, including computers, laptops, and printers, shall be managed in a legally compliant, environmentally sound manner, such as recycling through a recycler certified under the

Responsible Recyclers (R2) or equivalent certification. Refer to VA Handbook 0061, Electronics Stewardship Handbook, for specific procedures.

(3) Other non-hazardous materials (e.g., cans and bottles). VA recognizes that markets and material recycling opportunities vary by region. Materials that can be recycled in a cost effective manner shall be collected and recycled.

(4) Hazardous and other regulated wastes. Efforts shall be made to recycle hazardous and other regulated wastes in accordance with applicable Federal, state, and local regulations and standards. Recycling may include diversion of a material from disposal to recovery for energy content or other purposes, such as at a cement kiln.

#### **e. Disposition of Last Resort**

If material cannot be recycled or composted, it shall be disposed of in a safe and environmentally preferable method that meets all applicable local, state and federal regulations and standards.

#### **f. Purchasing Requirements**

Purchasing requirements include the purchase of recycled content and non-toxic or less-toxic products. There are requirements for recycled materials and products that are used throughout the Department. The detailed requirements for green purchasing may be found in VA Directive 0058. Some of the more common purchasing requirements of specific materials and products are as follows:

#### **g. Proper Application of Recycling Revenues**

It is essential that use of revenue from recycling at VA meets the requirements of Public Law 103-329, Section 608, which specifies the types of programs for which revenue can be used. Use of revenue from recycling at Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities must also conform to VHA directive "Accounting for Recycling Revenue at VHA Facilities" (VHA Directive 2006-001).

### **4. REPORTING**

a. VA Administrations and staff offices shall respond to OAEM data calls, providing information needed for Department-level consolidated reports related to waste prevention and recycling, as requested, from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other applicable entities. The Green Management Program Service, by the direction of the Senior Sustainability Officer, will disseminate, distribute, and coordinate report requests from OMB, CEQ, OFEE, EPA, and other applicable entities among the appropriate VA Administrations and staff offices. Organizational reports will be consolidated into one VA report and submitted to the appropriate office as requested. Information requests to Administrations and staff offices may include (but are not limited to) the following types of data:

(1) Improvements or updates to the hazardous waste, solid waste, and recycling programs over the last year;

(2) Percent of facilities with a recycling program;

(3) Number of facilities with a composting program, on-site and off-site;

(4) Weight of material composted;

(5) Weight and percentage of solid waste generated and diverted from various waste stream categories (municipal, construction, etc.); and

(6) Weight and percentage of construction and demolition debris and materials diverted from the waste stream.

## 5. STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

a. VA-wide waste prevention and recycling strategies are as follows.

(1) Life-cycle management. This strategy assures best value to the government and maximizes sustainability and societal benefits. First-cost (e.g., for purchase and construction) should not dictate operation and maintenance decisions. Sustainability of design/equipment/products must be factored with both.

(2) Paperless office. VA has initiated efforts to transform the internal and external working environment towards being paperless. To the extent that paper must be used, conservation and recycling efforts shall be maximized. Paperwork and paper minimization is addressed by:

(a) FAR 4.502 (a) "The Federal Government shall use electronic commerce whenever practicable or cost-effective..."

(b) FAR 52.204-4, which requires double-sided printing, on 30% postconsumer paper.

(c) FAR 52.204-4 Section (b), which states that contractors are encouraged to submit paper documents that are printed double-sided on recycled paper when not using electronic commerce methods to submit information or data to the Government.

(d) Executive Order 13514 Sec. 2, which requires agencies to reduce printing paper use and implement duplex (double-sided) printing, respectively.

(e) VA Directive 0057, VA Environmental Management Program, Section 2f, establishes waste prevention and recycling policy to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials and waste, and to maintain life-cycle cost-effective waste prevention and recycling programs. It also requires contractors to submit electronic deliverables.

(f) VA Information Letter 049-07-03, Cost Effective Paper Waste Reduction and Prevention Efforts, dated November 28, 2006, which provides guidance on reducing paper consumption and waste associated with meetings and conferences.

(3) Yearly re-assessment for cost effectiveness of recycling. To ensure that recycling programs are not only environmentally effective, but also life-cycle cost-effective (including waste diversion costs), recycling programs should undergo a yearly assessment that will ensure that recycling is maximized while cost is minimized to the extent practicable.

(4) Waste tracking. By tracking their waste streams in real or near real-time, facilities will have a tool to examine the efficiency of their



operations and effectiveness of their waste prevention and recycling program. Waste tracking will also assist in reporting recycling outcomes as currently required by OMB.

(5) Employee education and environmental awards. The VA Sustainability Achievement Awards Program is a means to encourage VA personnel to not only perform their jobs in an environmentally conscious manner, but also to develop innovative solutions to waste prevention, recycling, and composting issues. OAEM's Green Management Program Service administers the program, information on which can be found at <http://www.green.va.gov/awards/>. Additionally, OAEM will make VA Green Routine Awards annually to recognize recycling and environmental grassroots success stories from VA employees. Information on this program can be found on the VA Green Routine web site <http://www4.va.gov/greenroutine/awards/index.asp>.

b. Tools. There are many tools available to aid in waste prevention, recycling and composting. Some examples are as follows:

(1) Green Environmental Management System (GEMS) Training. In-person training is offered annually and is available on-line. The training keeps the recipient (GEMS and Recycling coordinators and other recipients) up to date with the state of waste prevention, recycling and composting at VA. A library of GEMS training can be found through the Center for Engineering and Occupational Safety and Health (CEOSH) web site: <http://vaww.ceosh.med.va.gov/Default.shtml>.

(2) Green purchasing training. Since procurement is a key step in waste prevention, recycling, and composting, it is important to ensure that the procurement process reflects environmentally preferable practices and requirements. Green purchasing training is available to all staff with procurement authority,

from purchase card holders to senior management, through the VA Talent Management System

(<https://www.tms.va.gov/plateau/user/login.jsp>)

Guidance is also available through the Green Management Program Intranet site at

<http://vawww.green.va.gov/environmental/>

(3) Administration-specific handbooks, program guides, and other guidance documents.

(4) VA Sustainable Design & Energy Reduction Manual, April 2010. Section 5, Reduce Environmental Impact of Materials, contains direction for waste and materials management during construction projects. The manual is found at:

<http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/sustain/sustain.pdf>

(5) Construction and Demolition (C&D) materials disposition. Specific methods and requirements for the recycling of C&D materials are found in the Construction and Facilities Management Master Construction Specifications (PG-18-1):

<http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/sustain.asp>

(6) Compostable and organic material. Composting can be done on- or off-site and must be done in a manner that meets health and safety requirements. The VA Environmental Management Action Plan tasks VHA and the National Cemetery Administration to identify and disseminate information on composting best practices to their respective organizations.

## 6. REFERENCES

### a. Public Laws, Regulations, and Executive Orders.

(1) Pollution Prevention Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §13101 *et seq.* and subsequent amendments establishing policies to reduce pollution through cost-effective changes in

production, operation, and raw materials use. The amendments modified the reporting provisions under the Toxic Chemical Release Reporting rules to include detailed information and trends on quantities of chemicals released to the environment that were not treated on-site or off-site; quantities of chemicals used for energy recovery on-site and off-site; quantities of chemicals recycled on-site and off-site; quantities of chemicals treated on-site and off-site; and quantities of chemicals released to the environment as a result of remedial actions, catastrophic events, or one-time events not associated with production processes.

(2) Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA), 42 U.S.C. §6901 *et seq.* (1976) and subsequent amendments, which give EPA the authority to control the generation, transportation, treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste. RCRA also set forth a framework for the management of non-hazardous solid wastes.

(3) Public Law 103-329, Section 608 authorizes Federal agencies to receive and use funds resulting from the sale of materials recovered through recycling or waste prevention programs.

(4) Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)

(a) FAR 4.502 (a) discusses how the Federal Government shall use electronic commerce whenever practicable or cost-effective.

(b) FAR 52.204-4 requires double-sided printing, on 30% postconsumer paper.

(c) FAR 52.204-4 Section (b) states contractors are encouraged to submit paper documents that are printed double-sided on recycled paper, when not using electronic commerce methods to submit information or data to the Government.

(5) Executive Orders (EOs)

The EOs with significant implications for environmental management and compliance in effect at the time this handbook was drafted are EOs 13423 and 13514. A complete list of all environmental EOs is too expansive to be included herein. A complete listing of EOs can be found through the National Archives accessible at:

<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/disposition.html>

b. VA and VHA Directives.

(1) VA Environmental Management Program, VA Directive 0057, January 2010. This directive establishes VA environmental policies. Its purpose is to set forth a comprehensive Department-wide environmental management policy to comply with Federal mandates and achieve internal goals. It is intended to provide direction to Administrations and staff offices developing and administering their specific environmental programs. The directive establishes policy in the areas of environmental compliance, green purchasing, chemicals management and pollution prevention, electronics stewardship, waste prevention and recycling, and environmental management systems. It also includes reporting requirements and roles and responsibilities. Directive 0057 establishes that detailed, subject oriented directives and handbooks, such as this one, 0063, will be promulgated.

(2) Accounting for Recycling Revenue at VHA Facilities, VHA Directive 2006-001, January 2006.

c. VA Handbooks.

(1) VA Handbook 0061, Electronics Stewardship.

(2) VA Handbook 0058, Green Purchasing.

d. Other VA References

(1) Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan (SSPP), June 2010:

[http://www.va.gov/oaem/docs/VA-SSPP\\_201006.pdf](http://www.va.gov/oaem/docs/VA-SSPP_201006.pdf) (revised annually).

(2) Environmental Management Action Plan, Office of Asset Enterprise Management, May 2010 (revised annually).

(3) Center for Engineering and Occupational Safety and Health (CEOSH) Pollution Prevention (P2) web site:

[http://vaww.ceosh.med.va.gov/01EE/Pages/ST\\_Pollution\\_Prevention.shtml](http://vaww.ceosh.med.va.gov/01EE/Pages/ST_Pollution_Prevention.shtml)

(4) VA Green Routine Website  
(<http://www4.va.gov/greenroutine>)

(5) Greening VA Waste Prevention and Recycling Website  
(<http://www4.va.gov/environment/WastePreventionRecycling.asp>)

(6) Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Annual Report

(7) Construction and Facilities Management Master Construction Specifications, PG-18-1  
(<http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/spec.asp>)

(8) VA Sustainable Design & Energy Reduction Manual, April 2010  
(<http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/sustain.asp>)

## 7. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are extracted from the EO 13423 Implementing Instructions.

**a. Acquisition.** The acquiring of supplies and services as defined in Part 2 of the FAR.

**b. Environmentally preferable.** Products or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. This comparison may consider raw materials acquisition, product, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance, or disposal of the product or service.

**c. Diversion.** Redirecting materials that might otherwise be placed in the waste stream to recycling or recovery, excluding disposition in waste-to-energy facilities.

**d. Life-cycle cost-effective.** The life-cycle costs of a product, project, or measure are estimated to be equal to or less than the base case (i.e., current or standard practice or product).

**e. Pollution prevention.** “Source reduction” as defined in the Pollution Prevention Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 13102), and other practices that reduce or eliminate the creation of pollutants through (1) increased efficiency in the use of raw materials, energy, water, or other resources, or (2) the protection of natural resources by conservation.

**f. Recycling.** The series of activities, including collection, separation, and processing, by which products or other materials are recovered from the solid waste stream for use in the form of raw materials in the manufacture of new products other than fuel for producing heat or power by combustion.

**g. Sustainable.** Conditions under which humans and nature can coexist in productive harmony, permitting fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.

