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## Introduction

### What is waste reduction?

Waste reduction means ending up with less to dispose of – less volume, less weight, and less hazardous materials. It is also called source reduction (preventing waste at its source), waste prevention (preventing waste from occurring) and precycling (thinking about your purchase before you buy). Whatever term is used, all refer to the same concept: reducing the amount and hazardous nature of your garbage. Waste reduction is the best method of waste management because it actually prevents the generation of waste, which saves both natural, as well as your financial resources.

Sometimes people do not realize that even recycling has some negative impacts on the environment. Recycling requires fossil fuels to collect materials, transport them to markets and manufacture them into new products. **Waste reduction** requires no energy or processing. It can be as simple as bringing your own coffee mug to work instead of using a disposable cup, or it can be as complex as redesigning a product to use less raw material in production, to extend its life, or to be used again after its original use.

This booklet will provide you with ideas you can use to reduce waste and save money. We can preserve and protect our environment by preventing waste and conserving resources.



The tips are designed to help you:

- reduce the amount and hazardous nature of your garbage
- reuse containers and products
- repair and maintain your household items
- purchase products with recyclable or minimal packaging
- recycle what you can
- buy recycled products

### Be an “environmentally conscientious” consumer.

To have less garbage going *out* of your household, begin by bringing less garbage *in*. Packaging and disposable items (like disposable diapers, razors, and plates) make up over 1/3 of our garbage so they are prime targets for any waste reduction campaign. Remember, you pay for all that packaging even though it becomes garbage eventually. The following page on SMART Shopping explains in further detail how to be an “environmentally conscientious” consumer.

# SMART Shopping

## SMART (Saving Money and Reducing Trash)

Smart shopping can help you become an environmentally conscientious consumer. You can save money **and** reduce trash since buying products with little packaging means you get more product and less waste for your money. While packaging is sometimes necessary for health and shelf-life reasons, it can be excessive. Research conducted by the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance found cost savings exceeding 80% for several products packaged minimally. Here are two examples from their research:

### Non-carbonated soft drink



0.13-oz powder packet



6-pack plastic bottles

Less waste, volume: 2693 ml, 99%  
Less waste, weight: 218 g, 99%  
Less expensive: \$2.64, 93%

### Chicken noodle soup



Condensed can



Microwave single

Less waste, volume: 296 ml, 46%  
Less waste, weight: 42 g, 46%  
Less expensive: \$2.30, 82%

## Use returnables

\$ Water and beer are available in returnable containers. Products sold in these containers often cost less because the containers don't need to be replaced after each use. Reusable containers are carefully sanitized before they are refilled.

## Buy in bulk

- \$ Buy economy-size packages of household products you use regularly such as laundry soap, shampoo, baking soda, pet food, kitty litter, etc.
- \$ Buy grains, beans, cereal, pasta and other items in bulk. They can be kept on the shelf for a long time without spoiling. Take a container to reuse when buying bulk.
- \$ If storage space is a concern, share bulk purchases with friends and neighbors. You can also extend the "buying-in-bulk" concept to mail-order purchases. Place an order with a group of people to save on shipping costs and reduce packaging waste.
- \$ If you currently buy food in single servings, try buying the next largest size and storing the leftovers in sturdy reusable containers.

## Choose products packaged simply















- \$ Given two equivalent products, choose the one packaged more simply, with no packaging or with a single, reusable or recyclable material.
- \$ Avoid buying goods with unnecessary packaging, such as "double-packaging" or a bottle inside a box.
- \$ Buy fresh produce without packaging whenever spoilage won't be a problem. Avoid using plastic bags for a couple of cucumbers, bulbs of garlic, or lemons.
- \$ Buy products such as fruit juices, drink mixes, and detergents in concentrate form to eliminate the need to pay for and carry a big package. Try bouillon cubes instead of canned soup stock.

## Buy durable, efficient goods

- \$ Select energy-efficient appliances and electronic equipment with good warranties and service contracts.
- \$ Buy durable, quality products when purchasing furniture, luggage, sporting goods and tools.
- \$ Check consumer publications for articles on products with a record of high consumer satisfaction, good value, and good repair records.

# Around the House and Yard






## General tips for around your home

-  Reach for a sponge or dishcloth instead of a paper towel to clean up spills.
-  Use cloth napkins.
-  Use sturdy, washable utensils and dishes.
-  Use reusable razors.
-  Use leftover gift wrap to line shelves and dresser drawers.
-  Use direct withdrawal for paying bills.
-  Reduce your trash – RECYCLE cans, glass and plastic bottles, newspaper, junk mail and cardboard.
-  Reuse scrap paper; staple together sheets of scrap paper to make note pads and shopping lists (use both sides of a piece of paper before recycling it).
-  Keep appliances in good working order by following manufacturers' suggestions for proper operation and maintenance. (Manufacturers' service departments may have toll-free numbers; call 800-555-1212 to find out if your product has toll-free assistance.).
-  Take a string, mesh, or canvas bag to the store.
-  Reuse paper, plastic bags, and twist ties.
-  Consolidate purchases into one bag; better yet, bring along a few from home and reuse them.
-  If you buy only one or two items and didn't bring your own bag, carry your purchases without a bag.
-  Before throwing a product away, check into repair and warranty options – this is often less expensive and more energy efficient than buying new.












## Cut down on food waste

Over 100 pounds of food per person is wasted each year. These tips should help you reduce the food you throw away.

-  Save food and energy by cooking multiple items in the same oven (check to make sure they can cook at about the same temperature).
-  Buy fresh foods carefully, not just because they are cheap or on sale – research shows that cheaper foods are wasted at a higher rate than more expensive items.
-  Compost food scraps. Contact 763-323-5730 about compost bin programs.
-  Store foods properly and use before their freshness dates expire.
-  Make meal plans and grocery lists before shopping.

## Reduce yard waste

-  Mowing your lawn at the highest setting and frequently watering your lawn is the best defense against weeds.
  -  Leave clippings on the lawn – doing this all summer equals one fertilizer application (if you do fertilize, fall is the best time).
- 
-  Buy a mulching mower.
  -  Compost! Anoka County has a booklet called *Composting and Grasscycling*; call 763-323-5730 for a free copy.
  -  Contact the Anoka County Extension Service at 763-755-1280 for information or classes on:
    -  reducing the use of, and proper applications for, fertilizers and other chemicals.
    -  planting appropriate species for Anoka County soil and proper care of plants, shrubs and trees.

 Homeowners use up to ten times more hazardous chemicals per acre on their lawns than farmers do on their fields.

## Reduce junk mail

For \$1 per entry you can register online at [www.dmaconsumers.org](http://www.dmaconsumers.org) or via mail. Contact the Direct Marketing Association and register all variations of your name.

Mail: Mailing Preference Service  
Direct Marketing Association  
PO Box 282  
Carmel, NY 10512  
Call: 212-790-1488

You may need to repeat every six months.

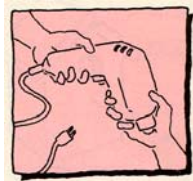


👉 Postmasters tell us that up to 20% of all mail is incorrectly addressed or otherwise undeliverable. Save time, money, and resources by updating your mailing lists and addressing mail correctly.

## Borrow/rent

Almost anything can be rented saving you storage space and money. If you own equipment others can borrow or rent from you, let them know. Friends, neighbors, relatives, and community groups are just a few examples who might be able to use something you have or want to get rid of. Other ideas include:

- ✳ Coordinate projects with others; rent or borrow seldom used items such as ladders, chain-saws, rug cleaners and garden tillers.
- ✳ Before discarding old tools, camera equipment or other goods, see if someone else can use them.
- ✳ Share newspapers, books, and magazines – take to work, or offer to your doctor’s office.
- ✳ When you have leftover paint, driveway sealer, etc., check to see if someone can use it – make sure the container label is readable and the material is in good condition before sharing these items.



## Shop SMART – shop used first!

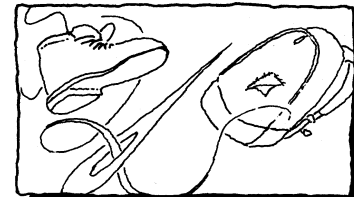
Save money and reduce trash. When deciding to purchase an item, consider used and “irregular” items. They are less expensive than new or “first-quality” goods and are often just as good.

- \$ Instead of discarding your unwanted appliances, sporting goods, tools, or clothes, try to sell or donate them to groups and organizations that accept used goods – you could receive tax deductions or cash.

Check out some great used deals.



- \$ Call 763-323-5730 for Anoka County’s *Shop Used First!* guide or look under consignment and thrift stores in the *local phone book* for more ideas.
- \$ Shop at antique stores, holiday bazaars and thrift shops – someone’s trash may be your treasure.
- \$ Buy and sell secondhand items at fairs, bazaars, swap meets, and garage sales if they will do the job as well as newly manufactured goods.
- \$ When possible, mend clothes and repair worn shoes, boots, handbags, and briefcases – shoe repair may be offered at stores where shoes are sold.



- \$ Encourage area merchants to donate damaged or expired goods and/or food items that are still usable or edible to local charitable organizations, such as food banks, shelters, and groups that care for the needy.

## Think before you throw

In general, before throwing anything away, ask yourself:

- Could it be fixed or repaired?
- Could it be made more attractive?
- Could part of it be used to make something?
- Could someone else use it?
- Would it be someone else’s treasure?



# Reduce Household Hazardous Waste

## Purchase and use products wisely

“Economy” sizes aren’t always a bargain when you add the cost and inconvenience of disposal. When buying paint, pesticides, and other household chemicals:

- \$ Purchase amounts that can be used up easily to avoid having leftovers.
- \$ Determine how much paint you’ll need – measure the area you’ll be painting, then consult store personnel before purchasing.
- \$ Look for the least hazardous products, read product labels carefully, and look for signal words on the label.

**Caution** indicates a mild hazard

**Warning** indicates a moderate hazard

**Danger or Poison** indicates an extreme hazard



- \$ Avoid purchasing products with the signal words “warning” or “danger.” Products with these signal words can become household hazardous wastes when they’re not used up.
- \$ Use hazardous chemicals only as a last resort, and then make sure to follow label safety directions on the container carefully.

- \$ Use up products before buying more.
- \$ Do not use pesticides that are more than ten years old, because they may be banned.



- \$ Shop at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility! Products brought into the HHW Facility are inspected to determine if they are usable. If the container and product are in good shape, products are placed in the free product reuse area for others to take. Remember that one person’s leftovers can be another’s useful products. By using these items up, the county saves hazardous waste disposal fees.

## Store products safely

With careful storage, most chemicals will stay usable for years and can be used for future projects.

- 🔒 Store hazardous products out of reach of children and animals.
- 🔒 Store chemicals in their original containers with labels intact. Do not mix chemicals together.
- 🔒 Store household products in a dry place. Keep them from freezing.
- 🔒 Store products away from sources of heat, sparks or flames.

## Dispose of chemicals safely

Dispose of household hazardous waste safely.

- 📞 Dry small quantities of latex paint and latex adhesives. Let the leftover latex products air dry away from children and pets. Dried latex products can be placed in the trash. Leave the lids off so garbage collectors can see that the products have dried. For a fact sheet on how to dry out paint, call 763-323-5730.
- 📞 Anoka County residents may bring household hazardous waste to the Anoka County Household Hazardous Waste Facility. Call 763-323-5730 or visit our web site at [www.AnokaCounty.us/recycle](http://www.AnokaCounty.us/recycle) for location, hours, and household hazardous wastes accepted.



💧 Did you know that storm drains flow directly into our lakes, rivers and streams? Never put anything (besides water) into a storm drain. Remember, we all live downstream from a body of water.

# Energy/Water Savings

## Save money on utility bills

- 💡 Insulate walls and ceilings.
- 💡 Plug air leaks around windows and doors.
- 💡 Tune up your furnace.
- 💡 Add storm windows and doors.
- 💡 Switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs. (Compact fluorescent bulbs last longer and use 1/4 to 1/3 the energy of incandescent bulbs.)



✍ Substituting a compact fluorescent light for a traditional bulb will keep a half-ton of CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere over the life of the bulb. Although they **cannot** be thrown in the trash, using fluorescents instead of incandescent bulbs reduces the total amount of mercury released into the environment. Most communities accept fluorescents on recycling drop-off days.

- 💡 Turn off lights when not in use.
- 💡 Call your utility company for an energy audit.
- 💡 Turn water heaters down to 130° – hot enough to kill bacteria and still save energy.
- 💡 Turn down thermostat at night or install a timer (estimates note savings of 2% for every degree turned down).
- 💡 Insulate your water heater and hot water pipes.
- 💡 Clean the coils on your refrigerator.
- 💡 Skip the heat cycle on your dishwasher and let the dishes air dry.

## Plant trees

Trees not only provide wildlife habitat, beauty and raise property values, they also provide energy savings. Leafy trees planted around your house save you money on air conditioning and cooling. Position the trees on the west and east so they provide shade in the summer but let light into the house in the winter. In colder climates, trees on the north side of your house can block the wind and keep your house warmer.

## Save gasoline

- 🚲 B-Bop (bike, bus or pool) to work or school at least once a week.
- 🚲 Combine trips; plan errands efficiently.
- 🚲 Walk or bicycle at least one errand weekly as weather allows.
- 🚲 Tune up your car.
- 🚲 Buy long-lasting, fuel-efficient radial tires and maintain them (to extend tire life, check tire pressure once a month, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for upkeep and routine tire rotation, and call auto repair shops to inquire about purchasing re-treaded or re-manufactured tires).
- 🚲 Inflate tires properly (they'll last longer and use up to 5% less energy).

## Conserve water

- 💧 Fix leaks – even small leaks in toilets or dripping faucets can waste thousands of gallons of water.
- 💧 Install water-saving, low-flow aerators on your shower heads and faucets.
- 💧 Turn off faucet while brushing your teeth.
- 💧 Cut a few minutes off your shower time.
- 💧 Replace toilets with new ultra-low flow 1.6 gallon designs (consult *Consumer Reports* for options).
- 💧 Don't use your toilet as a waste basket or ashtray – flush toilet only when necessary.
- 💧 Consider purchasing front-loading clothes washers (they can save up to 1/3 of water used).
- 💧 Wash small amounts of dishes by hand.
- 💧 Install shut-off timer for watering the lawn (water early in the morning to reduce evaporation).

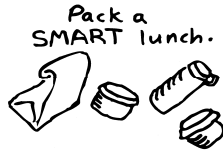


# Ideas for School or Work

## Reduce waste at lunch

Pack a no-waste lunch for work or school! Use:

- a thermos for beverages.
- reusable containers for snacks.
- a washable bag or plastic container for sandwiches.
- a cloth napkin.



Pack it all in a reusable cloth bag or lunch box!

✉ Ask your school to use items such as reusable cafeteria trays and silverware. Milk cartons produce a lot of waste. Two alternatives to suggest to your school are plastic milk pouches, which result in a much smaller volume and lower weight of waste than paper cartons. Better yet, reusable eight ounce plastic bottles, which are recyclable and produce almost no waste (only the cap is discarded).

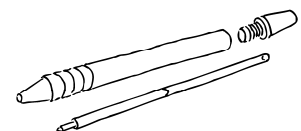
## Paper, paper everywhere – reduce it!

- ☐ Post announcements on bulletin boards.
- ☐ Use the back side of waste paper for notes.
- ☐ Cut up leftover scrap paper to make scratch pads.
- ☐ Copy two-sided whenever possible.
- ☐ Prevent wasteful copy machine mistakes:
  - train staff on the use of the copy machine's capabilities.
  - post operation instructions near the machine.
  - run a single-copy test before making several copies of a document.
- ☐ Use fax transmission sticker instead of a full-page fax cover or a wipe-off reusable fax page.
- ☐ View documents on the computer screen before printing.
- ☐ Place paper that has been used on one side in printer for drafts.
- ☐ Write on both sides of interoffice envelopes.

- ☐ Use e-mail to send memos, or route memos to staff members rather than making a paper copy for each person.
- ☐ Solicit waste reduction ideas from fellow employees.
- ☐ Utilize technology when possible – e-mail, telecommuting, teleconferencing, even the telephone can cut waste and pollution.

## Other tips at work...

- ☐ Return toner cartridges from laser printers and copy machines to a company that will recondition and refill them.
- ☐ Use direct deposit for your paycheck.
- ☐ Establish a place for excess office supplies, furniture and equipment for reuse.
- ☐ Switch to washable cleaning rags and towels.
- ☐ Examine your production and procedures to see where waste can be reduced.
- ☐ Establish and support a recycling collection program to decrease the amount of garbage that needs disposal.
- ☐ Encourage employees to bring their own washable mugs to work or consider providing mugs to encourage waste reduction.
- ☐ Next time your company buys a copier, make sure it has a duplex copying feature (two-sided copies).
- ☐ Install air dryers or reusable cloth towels in the bathroom to reduce paper towel waste.
- ☐ Ask suppliers to deliver materials in returnable/reusable containers.
- ☐ When your company receives multiple copies of mailers, newsletters, etc., which you can do without, call and cancel any extras.
- ☐ Purchase refillable pens and pencils.



# Buy Recycled

## Why buy recycled?

Recycling is more complex than just collecting materials to keep them out of the waste stream. They must be made into new products and purchased to “close the recycling loop.” By purchasing products with post-consumer recycled content, you support recycling by increasing market demand for recycled materials, thereby decreasing the need to harvest or mine raw materials.



## What does post-consumer content mean?

“Post-consumer” means the material has been used by consumers and/or businesses and collected in a recycling program. This is different from “pre-consumer” waste, which is scrap material normally recycled during manufacturing before it reaches consumers. In Minnesota, products and packaging must identify the minimum percentage of post-consumer content if they contain recycled material.



Recycle the way they say.



Recyclable means the material can be recycled. However, many products labeled as “recyclable” are **actually not currently recyclable in our region**. In an attempt to appear “green,” some manufacturers overstate the recyclability of their products or packaging. A material is recyclable only if you can recycle it through local programs.

If you’re not sure what is recyclable in your community, call your municipal recycling coordinator or call 763-323-5730 to obtain a fact sheet on the recycling program in your community.

## Buy recycled products!

Look for recycled products. This simple, but important, action will create demand for products made from **materials you recycle**. A large and growing number of recycled products are available. If recycled products are unavailable in your area, keep requesting them from stores. A persistent message will tell them your intent to buy recycled is serious.

Common items that may have post-consumer recycled content (check the label) include:

### Home Supplies

toilet tissue  
paper towels  
facial tissue  
napkins  
trash bags  
cereal boxes  
soap pads

### School/Work

envelopes  
file folders  
notebooks  
pencils  
copy paper  
3-ring binders  
playground equipment

### Other Products

carpeting  
poly-fil for coats  
lawn and garden supplies  
plastic lumber  
stationery and greeting cards  
brown kraft paper  
wrapping paper

Some people believe recycled products cost more than non-recycled products or are of lower quality. However, recycled products often cost the same or less than a comparable product made from new materials and can perform as well, or better, than non-recycled products. Some recycled products do cost more. This may be because they have been shipped long distances. It may be because the United States and other governments have subsidized the costs of making products from raw materials for decades, or it may be because small manufacturers of recycled goods cannot always compete economically with a large manufacturer. As the demand for recycled products increases and the recycling industry matures, more products will become available at competitive prices and comparable quality.



# Green Gift Ideas

We give gifts to family and friends throughout the entire year, not just during the holidays. Consider giving gifts this year that are not resource-consuming. Some of the most favored and remembered gifts are those we can make ourselves. Avoid the trap of “How much should I spend?” Shop early, while you have time to make careful choices. Last-minute spending often leads to panic buying, which can lead to unwanted gifts.

## Green gift ideas

- Look for gifts that are unpackaged or minimally packaged, without unnecessary plastic wrap or cardboard backing.
- Evaluate the gift for simplicity and durability.
- Buy gifts with long-term warranties.
- Know the store’s return policy and include tags or receipts for easier exchange or return.
- Consider the impact of your gift: Is it environmentally friendly and safe for children? Will it be reusable? Is it recyclable or made from recycled materials?
- Help someone recycle – give a can crusher, a set of recycling bins or a recycling cart.
- Give an experience (for example, a ride in a hot air balloon, parachute lessons or day trip on a train).
- Draw names or share the cost of a gift with a sibling or friend.
- Make a giant edible cookie card; put on a personal greeting with icing.
- Give a garden! Seeds, gloves, tools, etc.
- Fix up and pass along an old tricycle, bicycle, rocking chair, etc., as an heirloom.
- Buy recycled products (see page 8 for gift ideas).
- Purchase cards made from recycled paper or make your own from items found around the home.



## Other ideas for gifts...

- Theater tickets.
- Free baby-sitting service.
- Diaper service for a month for new parents.
- Stock in an environmental fund.
- A house plant.
- A solar watch or calculator.
- Durable wooden toys.
- Personalized “coupons” good for a night off from dishes, a foot massage, one hour of yard work, etc.
- Gourmet dinner for a busy couple.
- A magazine subscription to a favorite magazine.
- Homemade gifts, such as a knit sweater hat or mittens.
- A car safety kit packed into a coffee can (e.g., candles, orange hazard triangles).
- Rechargeable batteries and a charger.
- Season tickets to a sporting event.
- Membership to a museum or nonprofit organization.
- Still don’t know what to give? Make charitable donations or consider gift certificates, so people can choose for themselves.

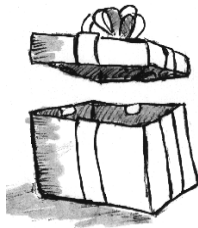


✉ Holiday cards bought in one year would fill a football field 10 stories high! If each of us sent out one less card, that huge mound would be reduced by a full story, saving over 50,000 cubic yards of paper.

# Gift Wrap and Packaging Ideas

## Wrap gifts creatively using:

- Old sheet music.
- Scarves, handkerchiefs or bandanas.
- Old posters and maps.
- Pages from your child's coloring book taped together (great for relatives).
- Newspapers (foreign newspapers are great!).
- Used gift wrap and tissue paper (press with warm iron if wrinkled).
- Wallpaper scraps.
- Home-sewn cloth bags.
- Fabric scraps.
- Pictures or advertisements from magazines.
- A "Hollywood box": individually wrap or decorate the top and bottom of a box – encourage the recipient to reuse the box.
- Sunday comic pages.
- A plain box decorated with leftover glitter, paint, markers, etc.
- A cake pan, basket or a wooden box.
- A present in a present (for example, a hat in a matching scarf, jewelry in a wooden box, cookies in a reusable tin or cookie jar, barbecue grill utensils or picnic supplies in a tablecloth, kitchen gifts in towels or all-purpose cloths).
- Reusable decorative bags.
- Wrapping paper made from recycled paper.



## Decorate packages with:

- Bows and ribbons from other gifts.
- Reusable items, such as hair bows, jewelry, sachets, shoe laces or small toys.
- Old/new neckties.
- Stencils or pictures from cards.
- Spices, such as bundled cinnamon sticks or cloves in a mesh cloth.
- Scrap fabric, lace, yarn, rickrack and seam tape.
- Scarves.
- Combinations of beads and buttons.
- Dried or silk flowers.

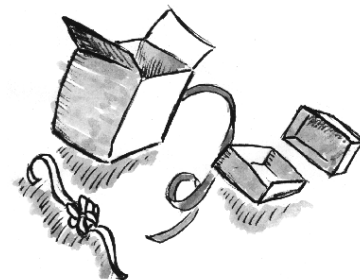


## When you mail gifts consider these packaging alternatives:

- Popcorn (include a note that birds can eat it).
- Biodegradable cornstarch packing peanuts.
- Used packing peanuts from previous gifts.
- Crumpled newspaper supplements (the ink on glossy paper won't smear like regular newsprint).
- Shredded paper.
- Used "bubble-wrap" from previous packages.
- Brown paper bags.

☞ Unwanted, **clean** packing peanuts are accepted by UPS Stores and Mail Box Express. Call Anoka County at 763-323-5730 for locations near you.

☞ If we all wrap only three gifts in reused paper, we'd save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields!



# Party Waste Reduction Tips

- ♻️ Use reusable tableware; if you don't have enough, borrow reusable tableware from friends or family.

*Don't use disposable stuff if you don't have to.*



- ♻️ Buy baked goods and snack food in bulk.
- ♻️ Rent party decorations, centerpieces and costumes instead of buying your own.
- ♻️ If you entertain often, consider purchasing sturdy, dishwasher-safe plates, silverware, napkins and other items from discount stores to keep on hand – they sell plates and other items individually so you don't have to purchase the entire set.

- ♻️ Use colorful sheets you have on hand for tablecloths, or handkerchiefs for napkins instead of buying new linens for every occasion.

- ♻️ Rent, rather than buy a tux or gown for a formal occasion.

- ♻️ Place easily identifiable recycling containers by your garbage can so guests can recycle their pop cans, bottles, etc.



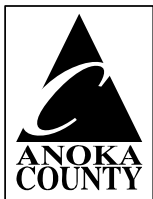
- ♻️ Encourage host or hostess to reuse bows and wrapping paper, and recycle cans, glass, etc.

- ♻️ Turn down the heat before guests arrive – their extra body heat will help warm the room.

- ♻️ Plan meals wisely and buy based on the number of guests you expect.

- ♻️ Give extra food to guests in reusable containers.

Printed on 100% recycled content paper, using agri-based ink.



## **Anoka County Government Center Integrated Waste Management**

2100 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, STE 340  
Anoka, MN 55303-5032  
763-323-5730  
recycle@co.anoka.mn.us  
[www.AnokaCounty.us/recycle](http://www.AnokaCounty.us/recycle)

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