



Moderate Risk Waste Reuse Centers

Focus on best practices at MRW facilities

Background

Reuse centers are an excellent way to reduce costs for Moderate Risk Waste (MRW) facilities and foster practices that are good for the environment. They minimize waste by giving hazardous materials a second life. When people learn they can get leftover hazardous materials for free, they're more likely to drop off their unwanted materials at the same location. This increases proper disposal and reuse, leading to less waste. A well-run reuse center, paired with effective public education, can keep hazardous waste off the tipping floor, ensure proper handling by trained staff, and create reuse opportunities. Below are practices MRW facilities can follow to run a successful reuse center.

Best Practices for Reuse Centers

- **Protect the Area:** Keep reuse centers in a space shielded from weather, just like waste storage areas at the facility.
- **Set Clear Policies:** Clearly define for facility staff which items should be separated out for reuse.
- **Separate Reuse Items from Waste:** Run the reuse center in a different area from waste collection to prevent confusion.
- **Use Signage:** Clearly mark where waste goes and where reusable items are available.
- **Inspect Regularly:** Have staff check the reuse center often for unacceptable items placed by the public.
- **Label Requirements:** Only include items with the manufacturer's label intact and in the original container.
- **Avoid Homemade Items:** Don't include homemade items or those without original labels, packaging, or containers.
- **Staff Oversight:** Have trained staff decide what items are appropriate for reuse, rather than allowing customers to make the decision.
- **Limit Access:** Open the reuse center only during normal operating hours when staff are present.
- **Avoid Expired Items:** Don't include items with expired dates.
- **Address Abuse:** Consider setting limits to discourage hoarding (e.g., 3 gallons of paint, 12 items, or a full cart). Keep records of customers. Recognize that some individuals may not adhere to limits, or exceptions may occur, but the overall benefits of reuse outweigh inconveniences of program abuse.
- **Prohibit Certain Items:** Exclude personal care products (e.g., soaps, cosmetics, etc.) unless clearly unused. Do not allow restricted-use pesticides, herbicides, or items needing special training or equipment. Similarly, exclude products known to be used to manufacture illegal substances, such as narcotics.
- **Waivers and Agreements:** Ask customers to sign waivers stating items are as-is and only for personal use. Prohibit resale or trade.
- **Collect Customer Information:** Some facilities record customer details, such as name, driver's license numbers, addresses, or phone numbers to track usage and enforce policies.

Reuse centers save disposal costs and reduce waste. These efforts promote community involvement and environmental responsibility. If you have questions about running a reuse center, reach out to peers in other cities or counties in Washington or professional organizations such as the [North American Hazardous Materials Management Association](https://naahm.org/)



Ethan Bean
ethan.bean@ecy.wa.gov
509-703-0621



To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6831 or email at ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.