



# Managing Waste In Hotel and Motel Operations<sup>1</sup>

Florida Energy Extension Service<sup>2</sup>

## WHY THE INTEREST IN HOTEL WASTE MANAGEMENT?

Florida's hotel/motel industry has been a leader in resource management, actively participating in energy conservation since the early 1980s. These efforts were boosted in 1988, when the Florida Legislature passed the Solid Waste Management Act. This Act mandated a statewide recycling goal of 30% by the end of 1994. In 1993, source reduction strategies were added to the Act. The hospitality industry responded by joining with the Florida Energy Extension Service to conduct a pilot project with six hotels using an Innovative Recycling Program Grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

A hotel waste audit showed that each guest room contributes from ½ pound to 28½ pounds of waste per day. And, the majority of waste in a hotel is not produced in the rooms, but in the Food and Beverage Department. A large property can generate as much as 8 tons of waste per day. Up to 60% of this waste is recyclable. Waste reduction by ecopurchasing can further reduce a hotel's waste stream. With support from EPA Region IV, ecopurchasing was added to the recycling strategies, enhancing the hotel industry's resource conservation programs. If a hotel's waste isn't reduced or recycled, it contributes to the state's environmental problems.

## HOW CAN WASTE MANAGEMENT HELP THE ENVIRONMENT?

Conserving energy has a positive influence on Florida's economy and environment. Reducing Florida's waste is an important energy saving tool. The recycling and waste reduction potential of the hospitality industry is phenomenal, and the Florida hospitality industry is providing a leading example for the nation. One hotel in the pilot project saved about 1.25 billion Btu of energy in six months by recycling. This reduction in energy use prevented almost 5000 tons of pollutants and greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere. With the 5000 properties and 300,000 guest rooms, this has enormous implications for Florida.

## HOW DO YOU BEGIN A RECYCLING PROGRAM?

- Conduct a waste audit to identify and quantify recyclable materials currently being thrown away.
- Select a materials disposal method before designing the recycling program.
- Involve the hotel's employees in all stages of the recycling program.
- Design a materials flow plan to identify container size and placement.

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- Select recycling equipment and method(s) of transporting materials.

### **HOW DO YOU START AN ECOPURCHASING PROGRAM?**

- Reduce waste by purchasing in bulk or concentrate.
- Reduce toxicity by using products with less hazardous ingredients.
- Avoid wasteful products that add to the environmental or economic costs of waste disposal.
- Repair and reuse products instead of buying new ones.
- Select products made from recycled materials.
- Purchase energy efficient equipment that causes less environmental harm.

### **WHAT IS A "GREEN" HOTEL?**

A "green" hotel uses resources wisely, incorporating energy, water, recycling and waste

reduction techniques into the daily hotel operations. There are a number of advantages for "green" hotels. Most actions that save resources and reduce pollution, also reduce operating costs and increase profit margins. Involvement in "green" issues can develop and strengthen guest loyalty.

Hotel managers report that most guests are pleased to see the hotel recycling and are willing to participate in the hotel's program. To increase guest involvement, inform guests about the program when they check-in. Some hotels provide guests recycling information cards at the check-in desk or in the guest rooms. This awareness allows both the guest and the hotel to participate in the growing interest in ecotourism.

### **HOW CAN YOU OBTAIN HELP?**

The Florida Energy Extension Service has recycling and ecopurchasing guidebooks that detail methods for initiating a hotel/motel waste reduction program. In addition, videos, other support educational materials and a staff of professional educators are available from the Cooperative Extension Service to help you organize, conduct and benefit from sound resource management programs.