

Reducing waste at Port Nelson – a Case Study

Background

In recent years, Port Nelson has been working towards implementing a range of sustainable work practices that will lessen their impact on the wider environment. In 2011, Nelson City Council (NCC) funded Waste Education Services (WES), part of the Nelson Environment Centre (NEC) to work with Port Nelson on reducing waste.

The Challenges

- To reduce waste to landfill on an ongoing basis and lessen their environmental impact
- To improve waste management systems and cost efficiencies

The Process

- A visual waste audit was undertaken by WES with support from Port Nelson in June 2011 providing a snapshot of the waste generated on site on any given day.
- This, along with baseline statistics relating to the previous 18 months landfill and recycling rates, indicated that there were a number of actions that could be taken to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
- A report with recommendations was submitted to Port Nelson to support them in their journey of waste reduction.

The Results (since August 2011)

- Port Nelson has implemented a number of measures to reduce waste to landfill, and some significant outcomes have been already been achieved (detailed below).
- Over time, these will significantly lessen their impact on the wider environment and improve cost efficiencies.

Implementing Change

- Recommendations were well received and there was real buy-in from the CEO and senior management team who are keen to see changes
- Thomas Marchant, Environmental Officer for Port Nelson, will drive the waste minimisation programme working alongside employees and contractors to bring about a change in culture and practice
- Implementation of recommendations are being staggered over time to help staff adapt to new practices and systems
- Some 'easy wins' have been implemented to lead the way for more difficult changes to be brought in.

Outcomes (since August 2011)

- The reporting system has changed to better reflect volumes of waste rather than cost of disposal. The system also tracks volumes of each recycling bin and waste skip which will provide a more accurate record of waste generated and enable Port Nelson to highlight trends over time, identify problem areas and improve communication.

- Waste Management Ltd, the main waste service provider for Port Nelson, are setting up their 'Commercial Combo' system at all existing recycling stations across the site, providing easy-to-use recycling wheelie bins to collect mixed recyclable material including plastics (1-7), paper, cans and cardboard. They are colour-coded and clearly identifiable as recycling bins. This will reduce contamination of recyclable material significantly. Materials will be removed and sorted off site.
- To support set up of the 'Commercial Combo' system clear, consistent signage has been placed at recycling stations across the site to prevent confusion and encourage proper usage.
- The report highlighted the need for staff and contractors to understand their role within waste reduction. Simple waste reduction messages are being communicated to staff via team leaders, contractor inductions and toolbox notes and this will be continued over time to reinforce the message.
- All disposable cups have now been removed from the site and been replaced with reusable, washable mugs. Implementing this apparently small change has stopped 64,500 disposable cups going to landfill and saved the company \$12,000 plus associated waste disposal costs every year.
- Two additional cages for cardboard collection and an additional recycling station have been put in place within the Quaypak shed to maximize collection of recyclable material.
- All plastic strapping and polystyrene previously going to landfill is now collected by Waste Management Ltd for recycling.
- Oily rags, in addition to the used oil, are now collected by ERS in Christchurch.
- In December 2011, Port Nelson will attempt to run its first zero waste Christmas party for approx 150 FTE plus partners. Staff have been asked to bring plates etc to reduce the need for disposable items that will end up in landfill. The success of this will be reviewed at a later date.

Future areas for development

Significant progress has already been made. Areas for future consideration include:

- Establishment of a composting or bokashi system to deal with the food waste from the canteen and smoko rooms. Before progress can be made, thought will need to be given to the location of these systems on site and what to do with the compost.
- Purchase of Dyson Air Blades to replace paper towel dispensers in high use areas. However, these require significant financial investment.
- Renegotiating the cleaning services contract to ensure that best practice waste minimization is being followed by the cleaning contractor.