

Pollution Prevention for Businesses



How Businesses Can Use Pollution Prevention for a Cleaner

Bellingham, Massachusetts

What is Pollution Prevention?

Pollution prevention (P2) is a combination of activities that reduce or eliminate the amount of possible chemical contaminants at the business or prevent these chemicals from entering the environment or waste stream.

A successful Pollution Prevention program will consider how to use raw materials, water energy, and other resources more efficiently, how to substitute less harmful substances for more hazardous ones, and examine whether toxic substances can be eliminated from the business.

P2 can best be accomplished using these three methods:

- 1. source reduction*
- 2. reuse/recycling*
- 3. energy recovery.*

Source reduction is the preferred method of P2 and allows for the most significant improvements in environmental protection by avoiding the generation of waste in the first place. Reuse/ recycling and energy recovery are also good tools to reduce potential environmental problems, and also can be used to lower the cost of business.

Why Is Pollution Prevention Important?

Any chemicals or wastes at your business that are exposed to rainwater will run off into the soil or into our town's storm drains, then into nearby lakes and streams.

Our municipal stormwater system was originally designed to carry runoff efficiently away from roads and buildings, then to deliver that runoff to ponds, lakes and streams. Since our storm drain system does not have any built-in treatment, whatever gets into our storm drains gets into our environment, with the potential to damage our local ponds and streams.

That's why P2 is so important: it reduces the amount of pollution going to our local waterways.

What Are the Business Benefits of Using Pollution Prevention?

P2's economic benefits include greater business efficiency, increased competitiveness, and reduced costs for regulatory monitoring and compliance. By preventing the generation of waste, P2 can also reduce or eliminate long term liabilities, clean-up, storage, and disposal costs.

And by preventing pollution there is a greater likelihood that your company will be in compliance with local, state, and federal statutes.

How Can A Business Start Using Pollution Prevention?

P2 for your business can be accomplished through methods such as source reduction, reuse/recycling, and energy recovery. While each business is different, each of these methods can be implemented anywhere.

Source Reduction

- Incorporating environmental considerations into the designing of products, buildings, and manufacturing systems enables them to be more resource-efficient.
- Rethinking daily operations and maintenance activities can help industries eliminate wasteful management practices that increase costs and cause pollution.
- Controlling the amount of water used in cleaning or manufacturing can produce less wastewater.
- Re-engineering and redesigning a facility or certain operation can take advantage of newer, cleaner and more efficient process equipment.
- Buying the correct amount of raw material will decrease the amount of excess materials that are discarded (for example, paints that have a specified shelf life).

Reuse/Recycling

- Using alternative materials for cleaning, coating, lubrication, and other production processes can provide equivalent results while preventing costly hazardous waste generation, air emissions, and worker health risks.
- Using “green” products decreases the use of harmful or toxic chemicals (and are more energy efficient than other products).
- One company’s waste may be another company’s raw materials. Finding markets for waste can reduce solid waste, lessen consumption of virgin resources, increase income for sellers, and provide an economical resource supply for the buyers.

Energy Recovery

- Using energy, water, and other production inputs more efficiently keeps air and water clean, reduces emissions of greenhouse gases, cuts operating costs, and improves productivity.

What Are the Environmental Benefits of Using Pollution Prevention?

Using P2 can benefit your community both environmentally and economically. P2's health and environmental benefits include cleaner air and water, fewer greenhouse gas emissions, less toxic waste to manage, less solid waste going to landfills, greater workplace safety, and better stewardship of natural resources.

This can also lead to a reduction in workplace exposures to hazardous materials, which can positively affect your workers' health and productivity.