

# ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

## ENVIRONMENTAL PLEDGE



This year I pledge to help the greenhouse gas reductions and sustainability efforts of my workplace. I will consider the environmental, social, and economic impact of my daily decisions and make every effort to reduce my carbon footprint. I will also share my individual sustainability efforts with others at my workplace. I will do my part to make sure we have a safer and healthier environment.

### Being Good to the Environment...IT'S THE LAW.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversees a number of laws giving it power to govern the activities of U.S. businesses and regulate their impact on the environment. Each of the laws has specific regulations and requirements that businesses MUST follow, and a review of each is important for all business owners. However, the EPA's regulations are often difficult to understand if not broken down into simpler terms and practical applications. In this section you can find a summary of major environmental laws and additional reference information.



#### Universal Waste Regulation

**Primary Purpose:** The EPA's Universal Waste Regulations streamline hazardous waste management standards for federally designated "universal wastes," which include: batteries, pesticides, mercury-containing equipment, and light bulbs. These regulations also ease the regulatory burden on retail stores and others that wish to collect these wastes and encourage the development of municipal and commercial programs to reduce the quantity of these wastes going to municipal solid waste landfills or combustors. In addition, the Universal Waste Regulations ensure that the wastes subject to this system will go to appropriate treatment or recycling facilities in compliance with hazardous waste regulatory controls.

**Applies To:** Any business that handles or generates "universal wastes." It is likely that most businesses will have to follow Universal Waste Regulations for one or more of these waste types.

**For Your Workplace:** If your business disposes of any "universal waste," you must dispose of the wastes legally and in accordance with the Universal Waste Regulations.

**For Further Information:** You can find the proper methods of disposal for each category at: [www.epa.gov/hw/universal-waste](http://www.epa.gov/hw/universal-waste). You can also find your local battery recycling center at: [earth911.com/hazardous-use-batteries](http://earth911.com/hazardous-use-batteries)

#### Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA)

**Primary Purpose:** The TSCA regulates the manufacture, distribution, and use of chemical substances and/or mixtures.

**Applies To:** Any business that manufactures, distributes, and uses chemical substances and/or mixtures.

**For Your Workplace:** If your business produces, imports, uses, or disposes of specific chemicals, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), asbestos, radon, and lead-based paint, make sure you abide by the TSCA. For more info on the TSCA: [www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/tsc.html](http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/tsc.html)

#### Clean Air Act (CAA)

**Primary Purpose:** The CAA regulates air emissions from stationary and mobile sources. Impacts of air pollution are significant; each day air pollution causes thousands of illnesses leading to lost days at work and school. Air pollution can damage trees, crops, other plants, lakes, and animals. In addition to damaging the natural environment, air pollution also damages buildings, monuments, and statues. It not only reduces how far you can see in national parks and cities, but also interferes with aviation.

**Applies To:** Any business emitting pollutants into the air. Currently, the CAA regulates more than 380 pollutants, including particle pollution (often referred to as particulate matter), ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides, and lead.

**For Your Workplace:** If your business emits pollutant exhaust into the atmosphere, you must abide by local and federal laws that regulate the amount of contamination in exhaust.

**For Further Information:** You can find more information on the CAA at [www.epa.gov/air/caa/peg/](http://www.epa.gov/air/caa/peg/). You can also see the Air Quality Index (AQI), a "public-friendly" way of using actual monitoring data to help assess how clean the air is in your local area. The color codes, which range from green to purple, correspond to specific pollution levels. Information on the AQI can be found at: [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov)

#### Clean Water Act (CWA)

**Primary Purpose:** The CWA regulates the discharge of pollutants into oceans, lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and other waters of the U.S. Pollutants regulated under the CWA include "conventional" pollutants (biochemical oxygen demand, total suspended solids, fecal coliform, oil and grease, and pH), "priority" pollutants (various toxic pollutants), and "non-conventional" pollutants (pollutants not identified as either conventional or priority).

**Applies To:** Any business that discharges substances into U.S. waters.

**For Your Workplace:** If your business discharges any substances into U.S. waters ensure you have a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and that your discharge levels are below those required by the EPA or your state laws.

**For Further Information:** You can find more information on the CWA at: [www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act](http://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act). For more information on the NPDES permit program visit [www.epa.gov/npdes](http://www.epa.gov/npdes)

#### Important - Reporting Requirements

As a citizen and employee, you also have reporting requirements regarding past and present environmental problems. Many of the environmental laws require notification to the EPA and/or local agencies as soon as there is knowledge of a pollution discharge or release. The first step to cleaning up an environmental problem is notifying the relevant authority. By doing so you will ensure a safer and healthier environment now and in the future.

#### Resource Conservation & Recovery Act (RCRA)

**Primary Purpose:** The RCRA regulates the management and manipulation (i.e., generation, transport, treatment, storage, and disposal) of hazardous wastes.

**Applies To:** Any item that exhibits ignitability, corrosivity, toxicity, or reactivity. Most RCRA requirements are not industry-specific; rather they apply to any business that transports, treats, stores, or disposes of hazardous waste.

**For Your Workplace:** If your business manages or manipulates hazardous wastes, make sure to abide by the RCRA.

**For Further Information:** You can find more information on the RCRA at: [www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/rcra.html](http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/rcra.html). In addition, if you have any questions about any federal hazardous waste regulations, contact the RCRA Call Center at (800) 424-9346 or visit [www.epa.gov/epawaste/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/index.htm)

For more information on the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Laws and Regulations, visit [www.epa.gov/rcra](http://www.epa.gov/rcra)

#### Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA)

**Primary Purpose:** The FIFRA regulates the distribution, sale, and use of insecticides, fungicides, and rodenticides.

**Applies To:** Any business that manufactures, distributes, and uses insecticides, fungicides, and rodenticides.

**For Your Workplace:** If your business manufactures insecticides, fungicides, or rodenticides ensure that your business is registered with the EPA and has all appropriate licenses.

**For Further Information:** You can find more information on the FIFRA at: [www.epa.gov/pesticides/regulating/laws.htm](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/regulating/laws.htm). For further information on these and other environmental laws, visit [www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/index.html) or contact the Small Business Ombudsman Help line at (800) 368-5888

### What you can do...

#### ... On Your Way to Work:

##### Carbon Conscious CO<sub>2</sub> Muting

Close to 30% of the greenhouse gases released in the United States come from transportation. Each gallon of gasoline burns 19.4 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> into our atmosphere.

- Take public transportation when possible.
- Coordinate with co-workers and drive to work together or look online for a growing network of carpoolers.
- Consider biking or walking to work one day a week.
- Explore telecommuting options when possible.

#### ... At Your Desk

More than 30 billion kilowatt-hours of energy is wasted every year because many of us simply forget to shut down our computers when not in use, putting 45 billion pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> into our atmosphere.

- Turn your computer OFF every night. This can also save it from mechanical wear and heat stress.
- Enable power management on your computer. Setting your computer to go to sleep (not screen saver) automatically during short breaks can cut energy use by 70%. See [www.energystar.gov/powermanagement](http://www.energystar.gov/powermanagement) for more.

#### ... At the Printer

The average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of paper a year. Every ton of mixed paper recycled can save the energy equivalent of 185 gallons of gas.

- Print and copy double sided when possible.
- Set your printer's settings to eco-mode or fast draft to make your printer's toner last longer. These settings use up to 50% less toner and print twice as many pages.
- Start a scratch paper bin to make use of bad printouts.

### Other Ways to Be Green at Work

**Turn OFF the lights.** The energy savings of 10 million employees turning off unneeded lights for 30 minutes a day is enough to illuminate 50 million square feet of office space. Curb phantom electricity. Many appliances still consume energy even when turned off. Items such as cellphone chargers left plugged into the wall can leak more than 20 watts of power.

In the U.S. alone, "phantom electricity" emits roughly 12 million tons of carbon into the atmosphere. Get off mailing lists. The last thing you need is another office supply catalog or credit card offer on your desk. Before tossing them out, call the company's toll-free service number and ask your name be removed from the mailing list. 62 million trees are destroyed and 28 billion gallons of water are used to produce them every year.

#### ... In the Breakroom

- 16 billion coffee cups are thrown out every year, which equals the killing of 6.5 million trees. Organize a "Chuck the Cup" program to increase awareness and encourage co-workers not to use disposable cups.
- Reuse your plasticware or use silverware.
- Take a travel mug to your favorite coffee shop and ask them to fill it for you. It's more pleasant to drink from than paper or styrofoam cups and protects the environment.
- Use a reusable water container instead of drinking water from individual plastic bottles. Every year, 17 million barrels of oil go to making plastic water bottles used in the U.S., and less than a quarter of those bottles are recycled.
- Clean with a green product. Most conventional cleaning products are petroleum-based and have negative health and environmental effects. Use a green product that is non-toxic, biodegradable, and made from renewable resources for better health and reduced toxic levels in your workplace.

### Recycling

#### What Goes Where?

Recycling is critical for reducing the amount of waste that goes into landfills every year. Take that extra step to sort your trash and place it in the appropriate recycling bin.

Make it a habit. If your office does not have a recycling program, get help starting one at: [www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserv/rrr/rogo/program/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserv/rrr/rogo/program/index.htm)

#### Why Recycle?

- Paper and Cardboard: Recycled paper uses up to 60% less energy and 40% less water when compared to virgin pulp.
- Glass, Plastic and Aluminum: Recycled glass uses 50% less energy, recycled plastic uses 67% less energy and recycled aluminum uses 95% less energy when compared to using raw (virgin) materials. In fact, recycling just one aluminum can saves enough energy to operate a TV for 3 hours!
- Batteries: Batteries may contain heavy toxic metals including cadmium, lead, mercury, and nickel—none of which are biodegradable.
- Electronics: Computers and other electronics contain toxic components, and may also have waste value.

#### Additional Links For Green Resources and Information

Green Business Bureau: [www.gbb.org](http://www.gbb.org)  
Green Business Rewards: [www.izitgreen.com](http://www.izitgreen.com)  
Green Business News: [www.greenbiz.com](http://www.greenbiz.com)  
Green Business Opportunities: [business.usa.gov/find-green-opportunities](http://business.usa.gov/find-green-opportunities)