

Sustainable Practices in the Law Office Annotated Version for Office Personnel

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Oregon Lawyers for a Sustainable Future has created this checklist to assist the law office in (1) assessing its current practices and (2) considering new practices that might be adopted.

GENERAL

- A sustainability policy has been adopted by the firm.
 - *For a model policy, see <http://earthleaders.org/olsf/LSF%20model%20sustainability%20policy.pdf>.*
- Employees have been educated about portions of this policy that relate to their work, and this education is part of new employee training.
 - *New employee orientation checklist includes education about the firm's sustainability value and practices.*
- Discussions have been held with a representative of the building owner regarding the OLSF law office tool "Best Practices of Office Building Management." and "Guidelines for Tenant Improvements."
 - *See <http://earthleaders.org/olsf/LSF%20bldg%20managers%20checklist.pdf>.*

RECYCLING/COMPOSTING

- Desk-side recycling boxes are at each workstation.
- Trash cans are not at each workstation but only at central locations.
 - *This practice promotes increased paper recycling.*
- Containers are available for bottles, cans, newspapers, magazines, and cardboard, and a procedure has been established for their recycling.
- A procedure has been established for recycling some items not accepted by the garbage hauler, such as Tyvek envelopes, batteries, plastic bags, and electronics.
 - *DuPont will provide a receptacle; call 1-866-338-9835.*
- Mixed-material items, such as a paper notebook with a metal or plastic spine, are broken down to maximize recycling.
- Compost bins have been placed in the kitchens for food scraps and contaminated paper.

PAPER REDUCTION

In the Portland region about 50 percent of law office waste is paper while for other businesses it's about 20 percent. The average lawyer processes about 100,000 sheets of paper annually. (Source: [Legal Assistant](#))

- Office policy states that all copy and print jobs should be double sided unless otherwise specified.
 - *Internal and external copying services have been directed to automatically copy double sided.*
- Copiers and printers are set to duplex automatically.
 - *Sometimes this involves new purchases and a retraining of users.*
- Office policy on data and document storage is intended to minimize the use of paper.

- *Firms purchase software, such as Interwoven Worksite (formerly iManage) or MDY FileSurf, which allow document storage electronically. To achieve full participation, training is essential.*
- ❑ For court and agency filings, policy requires electronic filings where allowed and favors double-sided hard copies.
 - *In some states a law prohibits courts from declining double-sided paper filings.*
- ❑ Boxes for paper printed on only one side have been set next to central printers, and employees are directed to reuse such paper for printing drafts, making note pads, or other purposes.
 - *Personnel can gather this paper to use in their desk top printers. Someone in the office makes note pads for any personnel who would like them.*
- ❑ Faxes are received and routed electronically.
- ❑ Documents are processed electronically rather than printing hard copies, for example, using scan option on copier.
- ❑ Letter-sized paper, files, and pouches have replaced legal-sized items.
- ❑ Procedures are in place for keeping mailing lists up-to-date so as not to waste paper.
 - *One person might be responsible for keeping a central data base to prevent duplication. Periodically, lawyers will send updated client lists and addresses to the central data base.*
- ❑ Office policy encourages sharing of phone and reference books (e.g., dictionaries, statutes) or use of online sources.
 - *Hard copies of phone directories are not automatically sent to each person but must be requested.*
- ❑ Firm is undertaking the ABA Climate-Challenge "best practices" for paper management.
 - *For an explanation, see www.abanet.org/environ/ecochallenge/home.shtml*

PURCHASING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

- ❑ Copy/printer paper and other writing paper products have 100% post-consumer recycled content.
 - *"Post-consumer" means that the material has been used by a customer and returned to the manufacturer for recycling.*
- ❑ Office policy gives preference for products with recycled content whenever available at a cost of up to 15% more than the same item without recycled content.
 - *The purchasing person automatically purchases recycled content products under the price preference without approval of management.*
- ❑ Letterhead, envelopes, and legal pads have 100% post-consumer recycled content.
- ❑ Paper towels have 100% post-consumer recycled content.
- ❑ File folders have a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content.
- ❑ Office policy gives preference for Energy Star office equipment and electronic equipment that meets silver or gold EPEAT standards.
 - *The Energy Star label assures that the equipment meets EPA energy-efficient standards.*
 - *EPEAT (Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool) is a ranking system that helps purchasers evaluate computers and monitors based on their environmental attributes.*
- ❑ Coffee is organic and shade grown.
 - *These certifications assure that pesticides have not been used and that forests are not cut down for coffee plantations.*
- ❑ Coffee, sugar, creamer, salt, and pepper are purchased in bulk rather than in single-serving containers.

- *The first three items are requested from your local office coffee vendor.*
- Suppliers have been notified about firm's purchasing policy.

PREFERRING SUSTAINABLE SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Soy-based ink is specified for outsourced print jobs.
 - *Soy-based inks emit fewer air pollutants than petroleum-based inks.*
- Office policy encourages the use of lunch caterers that minimize disposables and purchase locally grown, organic food.
 - *For Lunch Vendor Guidelines, see <http://earthleaders.org/olsf/LSF%20lunch%20vendor%20guidelines.pdf>.*
- Office policy encourages personnel traveling on business to rent fuel-efficient cars.
- Office policy encourages hiring event planners with expertise in sustainable events.

ELIMINATING DISPOSABLES

- Durable plates, cups, glasses, utensils, coasters, and table mats are provided in kitchens and conference rooms.
 - *Washing durables rather than using disposables saves resources and energy.*
 - *Bioplastics (made of plant material) are being promoted as "green," but they are still disposables. They will biodegrade quickly **only** if they are sent to a facility that can compost that particular brand of bioplastic.*
- Pitchers with tap water, rather than bottled water, are provided in conference rooms. Chilled tap water is available in the kitchens.
 - *A single-serve bottle for water is wasteful packaging and is more costly than tap water. Already-chilled water prevents a person from running the water until it gets cold.*

REUSING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

- An internal reuse center has been established for equipment and supplies such as computers, printers, binders, file folders, etc.
- Remanufactured cartridges for laser printers are purchased, and old cartridges are sent out for reuse.
- Old office equipment, furniture, and supplies are sold or donated for reuse.

REDUCING TOXIC PRODUCTS

- Unbleached and undyed paper towels and napkins are purchased for at least 50% of firm supply.
 - *Paper bleached with chlorine contributes to dioxin in waterways. "Processed chlorine-free" paper has recycled content that has not been bleached a second time, and any virgin fiber has been bleached with ozone, hydrogen peroxide, oxygen, or enzymes.*
- Kitchen cleaners of low toxicity and high biodegradability are purchased.
 - *If your vendor does not carry these products, you can purchase them at a natural food store.*

REDUCING ENERGY

- Office policy calls for individual computers and printers to be turned off at the end of each day.
- Procedures are in place for shared copy machines and printers to be turned off, or put in standby mode, at the end of each day.
- Timers have been installed, or procedures are in place, for turning off lights.
- Monitors are set to go to sleep after 15 minutes, or personnel have been instructed to turn off monitors when leaving the office for 15 minutes or more.

- Compact fluorescent light bulbs have replaced incandescent bulbs in task lighting.
 - *These use about a quarter of the electricity and last ten times as long as incandescent lights.*
- Office policy encourages reducing (a) the need for business travel, through teleconferencing and other strategies, and (b) carbon emissions of required business travel.
 - *Carbon emissions can be reduced through high-mileage cars. For information about carbon offsets or to purchase them, see www.my-climate.com or www.firstclimate.com.*
- Firm is participating in the ABA Climate-Challenge Energy Star program to reduce energy (or electricity, if a tenant,) by 10 percent.
 - See www.abanet.org/environ/climatechallenge/home.shtml.

PROVIDING COMMUTER INCENTIVES

- A subsidy of at least 50% is provided for bus passes.
 - *Employers can provide up to \$105 per month in tax-free transit or vanpool benefits to employees. The employer does not pay payroll taxes on the benefit.*
- Monetary incentives are provided for bike commuters.
 - *A common practice is to pay for an annual bike maintenance service up to the cost of the bus subsidy.*
 - *The 2008 Bicycle Commuter Act provides a \$20 tax credit per month per participant to employers of bike commuters.*
- Showers are available for bike commuters.
- Secure bike storage is provided for bike commuters.
- Employees are allowed to charge the firm for cab fare when working beyond public transportation commute times.
- Firm does not provide free parking for any personnel.
- Firm has purchased one or more car-sharing memberships.

OTHER

- If firm has a workplace giving program, employees have the option of supporting Earth Share or other environmental nonprofits.
- Educational speakers on sustainability are invited and promoted as a part of firm training.