



Special Event Waste Reduction Guidelines

PURPOSE

The City of San Luis Obispo requires all special events to practice waste reduction and reuse measures. This includes properly sorting all unwanted materials generated by their activities for recycling, organics/food waste, and landfill disposal.

This document provides information about City Ordinances targeting waste prevention and reduction, along with additional tips and suggestions on how event organizers can reduce the “waste footprint” of their event.

Did you know?



The City’s Climate Action Plan establishes a community-wide goal to reach 90% landfill diversion by 2035.



Landfills are the third largest source of methane in California.



Methane, a climate super pollutant, is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

SPECIAL EVENTS MANDATORY RECYCLING

All special events in the City of San Luis Obispo must provide recycling containers throughout the event venue, in accordance with San Luis Obispo County Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA) Ordinance No. 2008-3, Section 5. It is the event organizer’s responsibility to monitor waste and recycling practices and to prevent contamination of bins.

SIGNAGE

Each recycling receptacle must be clearly labeled and shall display a list of the types of recyclable materials accepted. Below are some options for recycle signage at your event:

- [Recycle Guide Poster](#)
- [Recycle Stickers](#)
- [Recycle How-To Video](#)



Recycle - mixed paper/cardboard (clean), aluminum foil and cans, tin cans, glass bottles/jars, plastic containers (empty).



Organics - all food waste, bones food-soiled paper (napkins/towels/bags/pizza boxes-*no stickers*), coffee filters, tea bags, wood chopsticks and skewers.

No compostable or plastic utensils/bags



Landfill - plastic bags, wraps, films, or utensils; compostable utensils; parchment or wax paper, shiny food wrappers.

No Hazardous Waste or Electronic Waste.

WASTE STATIONS

Recycle, organics/food waste, and landfill receptacles shall be placed next to one another. If possible, provide waste station volunteers to coach participants on proper sorting. Place waste stations in visible, high-traffic areas that do not conflict with the Fire Marshall’s requirements (For example, entrances, exits, and bathrooms).

If an event organizer chooses to have volunteers, the City has created a [training video](#) to assist with providing universal messaging.

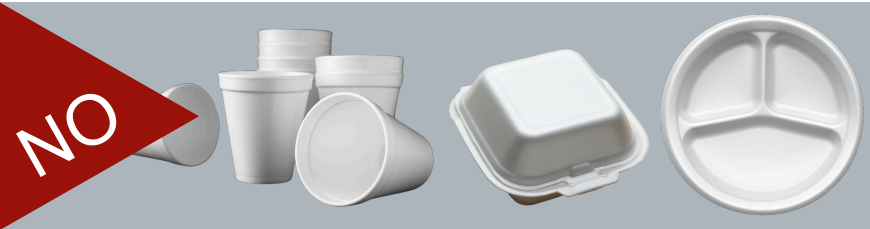


PACKAGING

NO EXTENDED POLYSTYRENE (STYROFOAM)

All disposable food containers used in City facilities must be biodegradable, compostable, or made from recyclable products. It is prohibited to use disposable food containers made from expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam).

(Ord. 1617 § 3, 2015)



NO SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BOTTLES/CUPS

No person may sell or distribute single use bottled beverages in rigid plastic containers **21 ounces or less** at an event held on City property. Additionally, plastic cups and other single-use containers may not be used to serve beverages from containers larger than 21 ounces in size.

The use of reusable containers/cups is required.

(Ord. 1641 § 3, 2017)

Exemptions - the plastic bottle/cup ban does not apply to:

- Emergencies.
- The sale/distribution of bottled beverages to participants of a participant athletic event.
- An event where the applicant submitted a complete application for review, or received approval, prior to the effective date of this ordinance.

HYDRATION STATIONS

The City has installed public water bottle filling stations to reduce single-use plastic. [Click here](#) for a map of City hydration station locations.



WASTE DIVERSION PLAN

As required by Public Resources Code 42648, et al. (AB 2176), a large event* or venue** must plan for the removal, disposal, diversion, and reporting of all recyclables, organics/food waste, and solid waste. It is also required that 50% of all materials be diverted from landfills.

Large events* must complete a Recycling & Disposal Plan two weeks before the event for City approval. The event organizer is required to account for all materials removed from the venue and submit a post-event report along with hauling receipts from each landfill, facility, and/or vendor. The report is due to the City 10 days after the event occurs.

EDIBLE FOOD RECOVERY



Per California's Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy (SB 1383), certain large events* or large venues** will be required to donate uneaten edible food generated by event food vendors.

Visit www.iwma.com/sb-1383 for more information on SB 1383 requirements for large events* and/or large venues**.

* **"Large event"** is defined as an event that serves an average of more than 2,000 individuals per day of operation (both people attending the event and those working at it--including volunteers--are included in this number) and charges an admission price or is run by a local agency.

** **"Large venue"** is defined as a permanent facility that annually seats or serves an average of more than 2,000 individuals within the grounds of the facility per day of operation (both people attending the event and those working at it--including volunteers too--are included in this number).

Violators of these requirements may be denied approval for future facility rentals and may also be subject to fines and penalties as specified in the [City's Municipal Code § 1.24](#).



Special Event Waste Reduction Tips & Suggestions

The following tips will help reduce the “carbon footprint” of your special event.

Thank You for doing your part to help make the City San Luis Obispo carbon neutral by 2035!

FOOD & BEVERAGE TIPS



FOOD

- Plan carefully to avoid serving too much food.
- Avoid items with excessive and nonrecyclable packaging.
- Provide foods that do not require plates and utensils such as sandwiches, kabobs, and egg rolls.
- Locate your food serving tables near waste and recycling stations.

BEVERAGE

- Advise participants to bring their own mug, cup, and/or reusable beverage container.
 - [City of SLO Hydration Station locations map.](#)
- Serve water and other beverages in aluminum cans, which are easily recycled.
- Replace plastic stir sticks with wooden ones that can go in the organics bin.

CONDIMENTS & ACCESSORIES

- Avoid individually packaged condiments such as sugar, creamer, salad dressings, mustard, ketchup, butter, etc. Serve items from a bulk container/dispenser.

DISHWARE & UTENSILS

- If using a caterer, request washable dishware and utensils.
- Avoid items made from expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam™).
- Use washable utensils. Set up a small tub labeled “used utensils” next to where people are using their plates, then transport it for cleaning and reuse.
- Use wooden utensils that are either reusable or able to be placed in the organics bin.
(Compostable and/or plastic utensils will not break down in our local anaerobic digester, so they need to be disposed of in the landfill bin.)
- Avoid using straws. They are usually unnecessary and must be put in the landfill bin.

EVENT ADVERTISING



PROMOTION

- Go digital!
- Send electronic invites.
- Set up an event social media page and website. Promote the event through emails, social media posts, and QR codes.
- Link the event to your organization's online calendar.
- Promote on other organizations' community calendars.



BROADCAST

- Share the City's discarded items sorting guidelines:
 - [Recycle Guide Poster](#)
 - [Recycle How-To Video](#)
 - [Recycle Volunteer Training](#)
- Confirm vendors and exhibitors are aware of and comply with the City's Ordinances and waste reduction guidelines.



BANNERS & SIGNS

- For annual events, produce reusable posters, banners, and yard signs. Leave off dates or designs so they can be adjusted with a patch or sticker.
- For single-use banners, consider paper or cloth instead of vinyl.
- For signs, use blackboards or dry-erase boards.
- Print signs on recyclable paper core instead of foam core.



AT THE EVENT

THE DAY OF

- Announce sustainability efforts and remind attendees to properly sort their waste.
- Place a volunteer at waste stations during breaks and clean-up times to help people sort their materials.
- Give volunteers a badge and have them view the [City's Special Event Recycling Volunteer Training Video](#) before the event for universal messaging.
- Avoid using plastic bags. Transport items in cloth or reusable bags, recyclable cardboard containers, or reusable tubs.

PRIZES & GIVEAWAYS

- Limit promotional items to useful, durable items or ones that have educational value.
- Avoid single-use items.
- Choose items that support your event's sustainability goals, such as flash drives containing the presentations.
- Avoid pre-packaged goodie bags or individually wrapped items.
- Purchase items made from recycled content such as pens, mugs, notebooks, and tote bags.
- Give gift certificates from local businesses as prizes.

HANDOUTS

- Avoid paper by posting QR codes that lead to online materials.
- Use the highest recycled content paper possible (at least 30% post-consumer content).
- Print items double-sided.
- Avoid coatings, laminates, foils, adhesives, and labels so items can be recycled.
- Encourage speakers to email electronic handouts to attendees or link to your event page.