

What is a Dumpster Dive?

A Dumpster Dive refers to an environmental management technique where employers and employees work together in waste reduction. Companies gather all waste to be sent to a landfill from either a single division or the entire corporation. Employers and employees work together in a sanitary environment to sort the waste into four different groupings: waste that should have been recycled, waste that could be recycled if appropriate outlet is created, waste that should be sent to the landfill and items that are not waste or can be re-used within the company. Once piles are made, staff can analyze proactive steps to recycle and/or reuse appropriate materials.

How is a Dumpster Dive Beneficial for my Company?

Dumpster Dives are both economically and environmentally viable for both small and large corporations. A single person throws approximately four pounds of waste into the garbage bin every day. From restaurants to manufacturing plants, tons of unwanted materials are being sent to the landfill every day. While landfills have undeniable environmental impacts, corporations must also pay. Quite literally, removal fees range from \$35 to \$50 dollars per ton across North Carolina. Now, imagine cutting those unnecessary fees in half, or even selling un-wanted materials for profit. Through staff education you can achieve waste reduction goals and long term sustainability.

Precautions and Planning

Pre-Planning

Safety- Taking precautions to ensure health and safety is imperative. Provide the following safety gear for both **indoor** and **outdoor** dumpster dives...

- Gloves
- Protective eye-wear
- Closed toe shoes
- Long shirt/long pants
- Dust mask
- Tyvek Suit
- Respiratory face masks in case of volatile or organic vapors

Trash Retainment - Inclement weather before, during and after the dumpster dive can lead to waste leaching and runoff into the environment. Be sure to plan how the trash will be handled and cleaned once the exercise is complete. The literal use of dumpsters is unnecessary when performing the management exercise as this can lead to unexpected costs. A crane or truck may be needed to remove the trash from the dumpster. Consider holding your waste on tarps in a contained indoor and/or outdoor environment.

Inclement Weather - If inclement weather is forecast, consider holding the dive indoors or under a large tent.

Notify Officials

Safety Officials- Contact your local fire department, LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee), and Division of waste management to let them know you will be hosting a dumpster dive. For safety, you will need their cooperation and on-demand help.

Waste Officials - Contact your local waste handler to see if they can help with your dumpster dive cleanup. Also, call your local recycler to help educate staff on hand and haul recyclables away once the dive is complete.

Take Measurements

Before

- *Calculate the amount of waste created before the dumpster dive.*
- Find out how many times a week your waste is picked up.
- Take pictures and video footage of the waste before and during the dive.
- Interview and film staff to see if they know recycling policies, how many times a week waste is picked up, and if they know where waste goes.

After

- Weigh and/or take pictures of the piles you have created.
- Keep track of monetary savings. Calculate how much your corporation was paying for waste removal and compare that to after the dumpster dive.
- Calculate how much money your corporation is making by selling recyclable/re-usable material.
- Follow up with your staff every 2 to 3 months by informing them of how much waste has been deterred from the landfill and the monetary savings the company has made. You can do this by creating a newsletter, brochure, video, or email.
- Keep your staff interested by providing incentives or an employee chosen charity.