

Greening Your Law Office

Lara Pearson, a sole practitioner and participant in the ABA's Law Office Eco-Challenge, spoke on "greening your law office" at the ABA's Techshow 2008. She has agreed to chair WCBA's "Greening Your Law Office, Part 2" program for our April 8 luncheon. The article that follows is from her remarks at the Techshow. Watch for more articles and resources on how to green your office and practice.

OFFICE PAPER MANAGEMENT

It's no mystery that law firms use, and therefore waste, an inordinate amount of paper. However, the extent of a law firm's paper waste is not limited to how much paper it discards! In order to reduce paper waste, one also must take into account the nature of paper that is used, preferably using chlorine free, 100% post-consumer recycled paper. Reduction in paper waste also requires printing as infrequently as possible and printing double-sided whenever possible. Law offices also should endeavor to re-use paper as often as possible, such as for taking notes, outlining motions or even doodling (just be careful to re-use only non-privileged

documents). Law offices should consider that, according to the EPA, the life-cycle of one ton of office paper, from production to disposal in a landfill, results in the release of about 11 tons of carbon dioxide and equivalent gases, which is a significant, and preventable, contribution to global climate change.

The ABA will recognize as a Law Office Climate Challenge Partner any Law Office that implements at least two of the following three "best practices" for office paper management:

- 1) Assure that at least 90 percent of all types of copier, printer, letterhead, and bond paper; as well as envelopes (including manila envelopes) purchased have, in total, at least 30% post-consumer recycled content;
- 2) Recycle at least 90 percent of discarded mixed office paper (defined as all types of white paper (copier, printer, letterhead, bond, and note paper), colored paper, file folders, and envelopes (including manila envelopes)); and
- 3) Adopt a policy of double-sided copying and printing for drafts and internal documents, including taking reasonable steps to enable copiers and printers to conduct double-sided copying and setting double-sided copying as the default mode on those machines.

The ABA also encourages firms to participate in the EPA's WasteWise program.

WASTEWISE

WasteWise is an EPA program started in 1994, whose aim is the reduction of municipal solid waste (such as corrugated containers and office paper) and select industrial wastes (such as batteries and ink cartridges) by organizations of all types and sizes. According to the official WasteWise website, www.epa.gov/wastewise/, WasteWise is a free, voluntary, flexible program that allows any U.S. organization to design a waste reduction program that is tailored to its own needs. The site also states that "[w]aste reduction makes good business sense because it can save your organization money through reduced purchasing and waste disposal costs."

WasteWise focuses on six means by which organizations can reduce their waste: i) office supplies/paper; ii) packaging materials; iii) recycling; iv) food/yard waste; v) electronics; and vi) purchasing/manufacturing recycled products. WasteWise encourages its participants ("Partners") to engage in the following activities, among others: using recycled products; printing double-sided; purchasing items in bulk; recycling; composting; and donating used equipment. WasteWise also suggests four progressive steps for its Partners to take when joining the program: (1) establish commitment to and oversight of the program by a management team; (2) conduct a waste assessment of the office's current level of waste to establish a baseline and your office's specific reduction goals; (3) implement internal education and external press regarding your office's participation in WasteWise; (4) Encourage continual support and improvement of your firm's office waste practices.

Watch for more articles on this topic in upcoming issues. If you would like to contribute to this series, please contact Writ Editor Jasmine Mehta at 823-2900 or Christine Cendagorta at 786-4494.

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