

Hotel Boulderado Boulder

Success Stories – August 2010

Joined 10 for Change in February 2010



Waste Reduction at the Hotel Boulderado:

The Hotel Boulderado has been recycling for over 25 years, donating linens and amenities to charities, and buying green whenever possible. Not a big deal, right? After all this is Boulder Colorado. The story that I would like to share with you is our commitment to a zero waste goal and our success in a relatively short amount of time approaching that goal. I highly recommend the EPA's program called Waste Wise Re-Trac. Their website is an inspiration!

www.epa.gov/osw/partnerships/wastewise/retrac.htm

Once you start tracking your information, you can compare year over year data, and generate extensive graphs that will help you chart your waste and prevention measures.

In 2009, we made a commitment to a zero waste goal. At that time, we were recycling only four tons of material each month, and generating a whopping 14-plus tons of trash each month. We never thought we would attain this goal, but now it is a very real possibility.

We first created a "Green Team" about two years ago, and meet monthly to discuss changes and celebrate our accomplishments. We made gradual changes every month as trash was evaluated and monitored each morning before the containers were emptied, and more and more items were recycled in different ways.

Western Disposal has been an incredible help as we made major changes as well as smaller fine-tuning adjustments each month. Some of our changes were huge. For example, we started composting 100% of kitchen waste from all food service operations. Employees were educated as to what items could be recycled and composted. Laminated posters in two languages were posted in key areas. Recycle bins were placed in common areas within the hotel.

A key point is to make it easy for both employees and guests to recycle. Gradually over the year, we started seeing some amazing results. We no longer had unsightly trash totes lining the alley. We were able to completely eliminate them by consolidating everything behind the trash enclosure.

Many items can be creatively recycled. For example:

- We donated about 75 light fixtures to Habitat for Humanity.
- Used hangers go back to our dry cleaning company to be reused.
- The flowers we put in hotel rooms come from a sustainable florist and are composted each week.
- Used amenities from soap to toothpaste are donated to one of the homeless shelters.
- We also pre-cycle as much as possible.

About six months into “Project Waste Reduction,” we increased our monthly recycled material from four tons to eight-plus tons and reduced our waste from 14-plus tons to seven tons. We essentially doubled our recycling and reduced our waste by 50%. An amazing feat in our opinion!

We continued to monitor and refine the waste/recycle materials and now as we evaluate our numbers a year into the project, they have changed even more. I’m proud to report that our monthly recycled material is now up to almost 11 tons and our waste is now at just 5.25 tons! And we are not finished yet...stay tuned as we navigate the last 5.25 tons on the highway to zero waste.