

Waste Management

There are many by-products of the printing process that can be harmful to the environment: solvents released into the air, various types of substrate waste or screen-wash wastewater discharged into the sewerage system. Managing this waste responsibly reduces health and safety risks while enhancing your reputation as a company committed to greener working practices.

Segregating different waste types

Create a 'waste hierarchy' showing where you can eliminate waste and where you can reduce it. Your waste contractor or local council will be able to tell you which kinds of materials can be recycled. Your suppliers should know which products or containers can be re-used. Look out for packaging, paper, metal and glass as well as textiles, wood and waste cooking oil (from your canteen). Then find the most secure way of containing each 'waste stream' and the most efficient way of sending it for recycling or re-use. See *The Introduction To The Waste Hierarchy*: www.envirowise.gov.uk/EN504

Ensuring your waste storage is secure and well controlled

Your work on your 'waste hierarchy' will tell you which kinds of waste need the most careful attention. Work out the most appropriate ways of keeping each type, creating separate areas for your different kinds of waste and ensuring hazardous waste, such as oils or inks, are in secure 'bund' or 'spill containment' areas. Using water-based or UV-cured inks will make this process easier and spillages less hazardous.

Keeping employees informed

The key to minimising waste is through good housekeeping, so the day-to-day working practices of your employees are vital. Involve them in the whole process from the start, asking them to identify possible hazards and opportunities for action. Then be seen to act – so once your policies are drawn up, let everyone know and make sure everyone works by the new rules. Some changes may be greater than others, such as reclaiming solvents, re-using solvent-laden rags for cleaning or re-using screen-wash water. Some training may therefore be necessary.

Segregating contaminated rags and cleaning materials

Hazardous waste is becoming increasingly expensive to process. Spillage or contamination is costly as well as dangerous. Your 'waste hierarchy' will show how secure your oils or solvents need to be, allowing you to take the appropriate action, creating secure 'bund' areas or introducing simple, segregated containers for each type of rag. Such management can also promote the re-use of appropriate materials.

Key words

Waste hierarchy – a list of the different kinds of waste generated by your business, starting with the most hazardous (e.g. volatile chemicals) down to the least (e.g. paper).

Bund – an enclosing wall surrounding a tank or container designed to contain leaks or spillages.

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