



Santa Cruz County Office of Education: Zero Waste Events

The purpose of this guidance is to support COE staff in planning to host zero waste events.

What is zero waste and why does it matter?

Zero Waste is a concept that requires no waste within an act, hence zero waste. Examples could be: hosting a party and producing no trash, or holding a meeting and using zero paper. Zero waste produces multiple benefits:

- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduces amounts of waste sent to landfills and incinerators
- Allows products to be used to their fullest potential for more cost effectiveness
- Saves money through reduced waste disposal costs

How to hold a Zero Waste Event:

- Share your goals! Tell your participants about zero waste goals so they can feel connected to the benefits
- Avoid using paper. In order to avoid using paper, one can email out the needed information before or during the meeting/event so each person participating can have the documents on their phone/computer/tablet/etc.
 - If need be, you can print out a few for those without access to a phone. Or, you can provide them with a tablet during the event with the needed documents.
- Avoid bringing single use utensils. Bringing reusable utensils is a great way to eliminate single use products during meal periods. One can also encourage participants to bring their own utensils (should be informed before the event).
- Avoid plastic water bottles, soda cans, and any other single drink containers. Provide a water filling station and invite staff to bring their own water bottles, and or provide reusable bottles/cups that participants can use.

- It is best to encourage staff to bring their own bottles. The host can bring a few extra reusable bottles that could be given away to those who do not have reusable bottles or provide some reusable cups to be washed after the event.
- Explain to guests how to use the COE food waste bins. If not hosting the event at the COE, provide food waste or composting bins. By supplying food waste bins, leftover food scraps can be used as fertilizer, animal food, etc.!
 - COE can work with the city to recycle those scraps to be recycled.
- Prioritize snacks without wrapping. If providing snacks, one can supply the event with fruits/vegetables, or snacks that do not have wrapping.
 - These snacks could be muffins, or snacks in jars that one could fill a reusable plate with. (examples: trail mix, crackers, almonds)
 - Finger foods are best
- Provide foods that reduce emissions/pollution and share the environmental benefits with your participants. By providing vegan/vegetarian options, one can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the amount of water pollution that goes into waste runoff from livestock. Meat production is a large contributor to CO₂, methane emissions, nitrous oxide, and other gasses that cause global warming.
 - Consider vegan options which have the least impact on climate change as they avoid meat, dairy, milk, and cheese which produce greenhouse gasses.
 - Vegetarian options are available at most grocery stores, catering companies, etc.

Conclusion:

These are just a few practices that could be adopted at your next event. The purpose of this guide is to help members when putting together a zero waste event. Adopting these practices can make a difference to the environment and also help increase environmental awareness among event participants.