

ZERØWASTEMARIN

Zero Waste Event Guide:

Steps to Hosting a Sustainable Event in Marin County



Zero Waste Marin is a governmental Joint Powers Authority representing Marin's 11 Cities and Towns and the unincorporated County on recycling, composting, and waste reduction. To learn more, visit www.zerowastemarin.org.

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Practicing zero waste involves minimizing unnecessary consumption while maximizing recycling and composting. This guide aims to provide practical steps to reduce the waste created at your event. Thank you for helping Marin County reach our zero waste goals!

Planning Your Infrastructure (~4 months before the event)

Prepare Waste Stations

In order to ensure your attendees recycle and compost at your event, they need to have access to recycling and compost infrastructure. Best practice at events is to provide waste stations, which are areas that have landfill, recycling, and compost bins paired together in a convenient, easy-to-use system. Waste stations should have bins that are color-coded (black or grey for landfill, blue for recycling, green for compost).

To determine the type and amount of waste stations you will need, it is important to think about how many people will likely attend, whether food and drinks will be served, and how large a physical area your event is spread over.

Your venue might have some waste stations already available for you to use. You'll want to find out the size or amount of waste stations available for you at your selected venue, and determine if you need to provide additional stations based on the size of your event. Contact the City or Town where you are hosting your event to determine if you can borrow waste stations for your event.



Signage

Signage is critical to remind attendees how to dispose of waste while at the event. It is important that signage is clearly labeled, color-coded, and relevant (e.g. if your event will have bottles and cans, your signs should have bottles and cans on them).

Download free event signage at zerowastemarin.org/events/. If you choose to make your own signage, check with [your waste hauler](#) in advance of the event to ensure you have all items listed in the correct locations (landfill, recycling, compost).

Emptying the Bins

Below are some questions to consider about waste hauling logistics at your event.

- Where will your bags be taken when waste station bins are emptied? And where will the hauler collection bins be stored during the event? This is the Disposal Location.
- When will the hauler be picking up collection bins?
 - Coordinate with your waste hauler to identify the location where they will drop off and/or pick up bins before and after the event. Don't know who your hauler is? Find out at [Zero Waste Marin's website](#).
 - If your event is on a weekend, it is likely that that special weekend service will need to be coordinated with the hauler. Plan for where collection bins will be stored until service.



So far, you have determined the type, size, and/or amount of waste stations needed. You've also ordered any additional stations for your venue, ordered signage to go along with them, and coordinated a pickup plan with your hauler. Now it's time to communicate with your vendors.

Working with Vendors (~3 months before your event)

Initial Communications

In preparation for your event, it is important to communicate with your food vendors about what they are selling and how they can help your event minimize landfill waste. It is important to confirm the following with each of your vendors:

1. Let them know that vendors at events are required to comply with the [Marin County Reusable Foodware Ordinance](#).
2. Confirm with them that any takeaway food is served on truly compostable fiber products (no "compostable" plastics or bioplastics), or with truly recyclable materials such as aluminum foil.
 - a. Share the [Event Serviceware Guide](#).
3. Discuss other strategies to reduce waste, such as:
 - a. Providing condiments only in bulk, avoiding many small packets.
 - b. Not providing bags, unless upon request.

Review the Rules on “Compostable” Plastics

The County's Reusable Foodware Ordinance prohibits the use of “compostable” plastics or bioplastic foodware at events.



Compostable plastics are not accepted at Marin’s commercial compost facility. Please review [our one pager](#) on bioplastics or “compostable” plastics so that you are aware of the rules and are able to answer any questions from your vendors.

Utilizing Zero Waste Agreements

Because the success of making an event zero waste hinges on the types of materials generated at the event, it is crucial to have your vendors on board. One way to do this is to ask vendors/caterers to sign an agreement that states that the vendor will sort their waste and align their foodware with Marin’s Reusable Foodware Ordinance.

Please see the Sample Zero Waste Agreement for Vendors (Appendix A).

Large Event Vendor Requirements

If your event is expected to have 2000+ attendees, you and your vendors are required to comply with California State Law SB 1383’s requirements for donation of surplus food. This means that you and your vendors must:

- Recover the maximum amount of uneaten / unsold edible food generated at your event to donate for meals for people.
- Have a contract or written agreement with a Food Recovery Organization, such as ExtraFood, SF-Marin Food Bank, or Respecting Our Elders.
- Maintain a record of donations which can be requested during inspections.

Note that this donation requirement does not supersede any health or food safety requirements. Contact a Food Recovery Organization to get started, or contact Zero Waste Marin with any questions.

Preventing Waste for Food Trucks

[California Health & Safety Code § 114305](#) states that mobile food facilities with potentially hazardous foods held at or above 135°F shall be destroyed at the end of the operating day. To prevent food waste and abide by food safety standards, there are a variety of practices food trucks and mobile food facilities can implement:



- Design menus where the same ingredients can be used across multiple dishes.
- Near the end of the event have a “Buy One Get One Free (BOGO)” special to encourage food distribution.
- Start discounting slow-moving items 1-2 hours before closing.
- Send hot food home with employees.
- Create bundle deals like “Lunch combo after 2pm” or “family pack” pricing to move volume sooner.
- When hot food must be discarded, place food in compost bins.

Event Permit Application (~2 months before the event)

Event Waste Management Plan

All of this planning should prepare you to complete an Event Waste Management Plan if you are applying for an event permit in your jurisdiction. This waste management plan permit might look something like the document attached, Appendix B, with variations based on the requirements in your jurisdiction.

Zero Waste Staff and Volunteers (1+ months before the event)

Whether you decide to hire a paid waste management service or recruit volunteers to help with zero waste efforts, it is important to have people dedicated to reducing waste at your event.

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Each waste station should feature a trained volunteer or hired staff person who assists attendees, ensures that there is no contamination between bins, and helps increase public awareness.

First, determine how many volunteers are needed based on the number of waste stations at your event. You will also want to determine how many shifts of volunteers are needed based on how long your event is.

Ideas for Recruiting Volunteers

- Contact local community groups or service organizations.
- Reach out to local high schools; students are often required to complete community service, or a Green Club might be interested in volunteering.
- Conservation Corps North Bay, Race to Zero Waste, and Green Mary are examples of options for paid station monitors.



Identify a Zero Waste Leader

In addition to your team of volunteers, you should assign a Zero Waste Leader. This person oversees all zero waste activity, and will train and manage your volunteers.

The Zero Waste Leader should carry a complete set of event information that can be easily given to another trained person to take over if needed. This set of information should include multiple copies of the venue map, volunteer list and schedule, and general zero waste talking points.

Volunteer Training

Volunteers will need to be trained to know how to staff waste stations. At minimum, volunteers must know which items at the event should go into which bins. If you need help with training volunteers, you can contact the Zero Waste Marin team at Zero.Waste@MarinCounty.gov.

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To implement your volunteer training:

1. Determine how you will be doing your training. Is it in the days before the event, or the day of the event when they arrive?
 - a. If the training is before the event, is it in-person or online?
 - b. Who is leading the training?
2. Get examples of items being provided at the event from vendors.
3. Confirm how these items are sorted with the hauler or Zero Waste Marin.
4. Provide example items to the volunteers and teach them where these items must be sorted. Provide a one-page “cheat sheet”, if necessary.

Also, below is a list of supplies that will be helpful for your volunteers:

- Identifying items such as lanyards, hats, or vests to help recognize them.
- Gloves, trash grabbers, and extra bags to manage the waste stations.
- A map with waste stations and disposal locations where bags will be emptied.

During the Event

Setting Up Waste Stations

Best practices for waste stations include:

1. Ensure stations are available in high-traffic areas, e.g. by main eating areas.
2. Color-code bins (black or grey for landfill, blue for recycling, green for compost). Consider using bags that match these colors to reinforce for attendees (however, note that recycling and compost must be removed from bags when doing final disposal into hauler bins).
3. Bins must be clearly marked with labels or signs indicating which materials are accepted or not accepted for each bin.
4. Recycling and compost bins must be placed adjacent to each trash can (restroom bins are excluded). Avoid “lonely” bins, e.g. bins without all sorting options located together.
5. Assign waste monitors at waste stations to assist with sorting.
6. Ensure all stations are consistent and look the same.
7. If using reusable foodware or other items, identify and mark location for those items to be returned to when attendees are finished with them.



Coordinate Staff and Volunteers

Ensure your volunteers know where to check in and who to ask if they have questions. Distribute supplies and complete any necessary training when they arrive.

Waste Logistics During the Event

Below are some helpful questions to answer about day-of logistics at your event.

- How often will the bags be collected from waste stations?
- Who will pick up full bags from waste stations and bring them to the disposal location?
- Where will the bags be taken, and the collection bins be stored during the event (disposal location)?
- When will the hauler be picking up collection bins?
- Who will be taking metrics to determine if you were successful in reducing waste?

Waste Logistics After The Event

Ensure the waste collected at stations makes its way to the collection bins that will be serviced by the hauler, and ensure you are aware of what day they are coming. Before the waste is collected, you can take photos of the final, sorted material to determine if there were any issues contamination, or if sorting was successful.

For additional guidance, contact Zero Waste Marin by emailing Zero.Waste@MarinCounty.gov.



Appendix A – Sample Zero Waste Agreement for Vendors

Thank you for your interest in participating at *[event name]*! We are proud to announce that this event will be utilizing zero waste best practices.

The goal at a zero waste event is to plan ahead and distribute only food and materials that are recyclable or compostable, not any materials that will be landfilled. “Waste Stations” consisting of recycling, compost and landfill collection containers will be available to participants at numerous locations throughout the event venue. As a vendor handing out food or products at this event, you play a vital part in the success of our zero waste initiative.

Vendors attending *[event name]* are required to follow the guidelines below:

- Comply with the [Marin County Reusable Foodware Ordinance](#).
- Remove any non-recyclable or non-compostable items from your booth for the event. You will only be allowed to provide truly reusable, recyclable or compostable products.
- Any disposable foodware must be unlined compostable paper/wood/natural-fiber (no bioplastics/compostable plastic), or made of glass or aluminum. Fiber foodware must be certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) or chemical-free.
 - Find acceptable compostable and recyclable products serviceware for zero waste events at: www.zerowastemarin.org/events
- Add a \$0.25 charge for ALL disposable cups, to be retained by the you the food vendor, with charges itemized on customer receipt (exemptions for CalFresh/SNAP and WIC).
- Do not distribute or use polystyrene foodware (Styrofoam) at the event.
- Utilize the proper waste sorting bins (landfill, recycling, and compost) when disposing of any of their materials at the event, or you may “pack-it-in, pack-it-out” and dispose of your waste at your place of business.

Here are some other ideas that can help you achieve our zero waste goal:

- Use the least amount of packaging possible or remove packaging before distributing items at the event.
- Use post-consumer recycled content paper for flyers, programs, and handouts. Choose to print on paper with the highest recycled content you can find.
- Note that candy wrappers, energy bars, chip bags and packaging from pre-packaged food are landfill items, and avoid them when possible.

Your signature on the vendor application acknowledges that you will abide by all zero waste guidelines and requirements. Thank you for supporting our zero waste goal and we look forward to working with you to make this a successful event.

Sincerely,

Appendix B – Sample Event Waste Management Plan

Public Event Permit: Waste Management Plan

Waste disposal is the responsibility of the event organizer.

For free assistance and support with filling out your waste management plan, please reach out to Zero Waste Marin at zero.waste@marincounty.gov. Further Zero Waste Event guidance can be found at <https://zerowastemarin.org/events/>.

Logistical Information

1. What kind of waste bins will be provided at the event? Check all that apply.

- Rolling carts provided by the waste hauler/
- ClearStream collection stations.
- Other (please explain):

2. Total number of waste receptacles: _____

- a. Number of landfill bins: _____
- b. Number of recycling bins: _____
- c. Number of compost bins: _____

If you are ordering additional bins to be delivered by a waste hauler, please indicate:

- Delivery date & time: _____
- Pick-up date & time: _____

Please explain your plan for clean-up and waste removal during and after the event (e.g. who will be responsible for emptying an overflowing container during the event, what is your plan for ensuring collected materials make it into the correct bins for pick-up):

Waste Management Regulations for Events

California Law SB54 (2022): Plastic Pollution Producer Responsibility

Checkbox	Requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do not distribute or use polystyrene foodware (Styrofoam) at your event

California Law SB 1383 (2016): Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (Section 18984.9)

Checkbox	Requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide an adequate size, number, and location of recycling and compost bins to capture all recyclable or compostable material
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recycling and compost bins must be placed adjacent to each trash can (restroom bins are excluded)

Appendix B – Sample Event Waste Management Plan

Public Event Permit: Waste Management Plan

Waste disposal is the responsibility of the event organizer.

	Bins must be clearly marked with labels or signs indicating which materials are accepted and not accepted for each bin. To download free, compliant event signage, visit: https://zerowastemarin.org/events/
	Color-code bins: black/grey for landfill, blue for recycling, green for compost

For events serving food with 2000+ attendees, (SB 1383 Section 18991.3)

	Recover the maximum amount of uneaten / unsold edible food generated at your event to donate for meals for people
	Have a contract or written agreement with a Food Recovery Organization, such as ExtraFood , SF-Marin Food Bank , or Respecting Our Elders
	Maintain a record of donations which can be requested during inspections

Access more resources for SB 1383 compliance at: <https://zerowastemarin.org/sb-1383-short-lived-climate-pollutants/>

Please describe your plan for complying with the SB 1383 requirements listed above:

The Marin County Reusable Foodware Ordinance applies to any business that sells food ready for consumption, including food trucks and temporary food operators.

Checkbox	Requirements
	Plastic and plastic-lined paper takeout containers are prohibited
	Disposable foodware must be unlined compostable paper/wood/natural-fiber (no bioplastics/compostable plastic), or made of glass or aluminum. If using fiber foodware, it must be certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) or chemical-free.
	Inform vendors of \$0.25 charge to be added for ALL disposable cups (exemptions for CalFresh/SNAP and WIC Customer), to be retained by the Food Vendor, with charges itemized on customer receipt

To find a list of compliant Foodware, visit:

<https://www.marincounty.gov/departments/cda/env-health-svcs/foodware-ordinance/purchasing-guide>

Please describe your plan for complying with the Marin County Reusable Foodware Ordinance requirements listed above:
