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Trash cans out, recycling bins in

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Trash at Purdue University has a new definition.

Snack wrappers, liquids, facial tissues, food waste and restroom paper should be the only items destined for the garbage bin under a new initiative.

To kick off Purdue Green Week, officials on Monday announced a plan to increase the overall campus recycling rate to 65 percent in five years. To help get there, Purdue is replacing trash cans under desks with rubber recycling containers and providing centralized receptacles to drop refuse.

"The key is we will no longer collect trash at the deskside," said grounds director Gary Evans. "That is the bottom line."

A few campus buildings have already made the switch with reportedly good results. Plans are for all buildings to follow suit by next summer.

Evans said staffers at Freehafer Hall reached 99.5 percent participation in the program after four weeks this summer. Within a week staff participation inside the Civil Engineering Building topped 99 percent and recycled volume increased more than 50 percent.

Don Staley, a senior landscape architect working in Freehafer Hall, said a few years ago recycling was limited to paper, cans and newspaper.

"This change is really going to encourage people to do it," he said. "It is much more obvious. You just look and it is there. I think it is going to help people all over recycle more."

But not everyone is excited about carrying their tissues and fruit peels to another area.

Patricia Boling, a political science and women's studies associate professor, found out Monday her Beering Hall office trash can would be removed today as part of the program.

"We had no warning at all," she said. "We weren't consulted about this."

Boling, a regular recycler, worries that people will leave food waste in their offices or classrooms, creating unsanitary conditions.

"You don't want apple peels and stuff that can attract airborne nastiness laying around," she said. "Or people carrying around used tissues in the hallway."

The blue recycling containers have two compartments. One is for office paper and the other for mixed recyclables, such as plastics, cans, books and junk mail.

The plan simplifies what type of office paper can be tossed to recycle, said Terry Ashlock, director of building services.

"Before we had a laundry list of what was and wasn't allowed," he said. "Now its just unbound, non-



By Brent Drinkut/Journal & Courier
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Don Staley, a Senior Landscape Architect at Purdue, works in his office recently. The university is making efforts to redefine how the campus tosses its refuse by switching out trash cans for recycling bins.

glossy and dull colors."

Under the program, custodial workers will not have increased work. Twice a week they will empty individual recycling bins.

Reaching a point of zero waste is far away, Evans said. That is why a "sensible goal" of 65 percent by 2014 was picked, he said.

Already, recycling reached 48 percent last year. That was done through a combination of traditional recycling, such as paper, plastics and cans, plus efforts by the university warehouse, transportation and utility divisions. That saved about 500 tons of trash from being sent to landfills and \$19,000 spent in landfill tipping fees.

Additional Facts

What is trash at Purdue?

Here is a breakdown of how Purdue defines office paper, mixed recyclables and trash.

Office paper: Unbound, non-glossy, neutral color.

Mixed recyclables: Newspapers, magazines, books, notebooks, pamphlets, glossy and bright colored paper, junk mail, cans and plastic.

Trash: Food waste, snack wrappers, liquids, facial tissues and restroom paper.

For more information, go to www.purdue.edu/sustainability
