



All kinds of everything

Whether wood or paper, food or fluorescent lighting, FMs are in the front line in the battle to reduce commercial waste. Ian Boughton has some suggestions

It is one thing to accept responsibility for waste management – it is quite another to assess just how many kinds of waste can crop up in corporate premises. And something has to be done with it. As Marc Bird of the Kinnarps office furniture company once memorably said to the FM profession: you can't talk of throwing things away because there is no such place as 'away' – everything ends up somewhere.

So – what do you do with all those strange items you hadn't thought of?

The issue is so huge that the big facilities management providers have got involved, and deeply. Sodexo has introduced new policies to improve waste management across the sites it manages, with even senior management joining ground staff to go through an NVQ in environmental management – 29 senior managers have gone through training already. The company has created 12 sections of policies, which even stretch to preparation for emergencies in waste situations, and also offers quarterly updates on waste legislation.

So how does the FM assess what waste covers? According to Claire McNeil, business development manager at Environmental Waste Systems: 'One of our biggest headaches is getting the message out to all staff and building tenants. Our job does not end with the equipment going on site – we have to educate them on why they should use our equipment as well as how.

'Quite literally, this involves getting to know the waste streams they produce and measuring the quantities. This is why we are introducing a DVD as part of our installation process. This will raise environmental awareness among staff, so the FM gets the best from an investment in waste recycling equipment.'

Waste responsibilities may stretch further than expected. Corporate wood, for example, poses a bigger problem than most realise, says David Treadwell, director of the Mid Sussex Wood Recycling Project, a not-for-profit social enterprise group. 'The biggest issue we face is the education of site managers and facilities managers in appreciating the alternatives to

Waste problems are piling up for facilities managers. About three million tonnes of catering waste, for example, is still trucked to landfill each year



'Renting a baler could save half of your bin lift costs right away'

Left: a split bin enables end users to separate their waste for later recycling. Below: Greenled now has LEDs that offer the same quality of light as halogens



landfill and the comparative costs. Every day, a huge amount of waste timber is generated – UK business buys six million wooden pallets a year, and the majority are non-returnable. We recently worked at the Sussex University Falmer Campus, and we collected 36 tonnes of timber from this project.'

The Mid Sussex project has now devised a recycling service for contaminated wood, which is painted or laminated timber, and in all has saved 320 tonnes of timber from landfill in its first year of operation.

RECYCLING

One of the first items for consideration when recycling became an issue was office paper waste. And we still haven't got it entirely right. According to Anthony Pearlgood, commercial director of PHS Datashred, each person in the UK uses on average over 200 kilograms of paper per year, and although a recycling target of 79 per cent of this is realistically achievable, we are still well below that.

'There is still room for improvement in how offices manage their waste,' he says. 'Often areas can be overlooked. A review of other

waste such as bottles, cans and IT materials presents opportunities for organisations to increase the percentage of waste they recycle.' This, says Datashred, is done by a shop-floor assessment, not by an arbitrary decision made from a remote management desk. Taking a desk-level holistic view and deliberately looking at how all kinds of waste can be bundled into a single contract, says Datashred, is an innovative approach, which can realistically aim for a goal of recycling maybe 80 per cent of all office waste.

Recovering paper and card unscientifically is still the FM's biggest problem, says the baler company Mil-tec. Throwing waste away without baling or compacting it means paying for the collection of a skip whose contents may be 80 per cent air.

An exercise within the pub trade once discovered that staff were throwing cardboard cases into skips without flattening them first, with the result that six skips were being paid for instead of one. Mil-tec has recently done a similar exercise with the St Austell brewery pub chain. Sally Sandford, the brewery's environmental manager, says that an exercise

in compacting waste on site did have an effect – the brewery saved 40 per cent of the space used for waste, and £6,500 in collection costs. The brewery now recovers waste cardboard in its own drays and sends it, baled, for processing into plasterboard or corrugated packaging.

This is what Mil-tec refers to as 'environmental' waste management, and says that its balers now process 30,000 tonnes of recyclable waste a year, most of which previously went to landfill or was burned.

Look at your 'degree of compression', says Mil-tec. What is called 'treading down', or the way most companies still squash cardboard boxes, is wildly inefficient, whereas a baler compresses at a rate of 16:1. What this means in practice is that if your bin lifts cost you more than £40 a week, which is perfectly likely when some areas charge £5 a bin and some charge £14, and if 70 per cent of your waste is recyclable, then renting a baler could save half of your costs right away.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

Considering disposal of what is already on site is one thing – far better to consider the waste

consequences of what you buy, says Greenled, a specialist in sustainable lighting. 'Consider the current darling of the energy-conscious – the compact fluorescent lamp bulb.

Next, consider the "official CFL disposal advice" offered by the Department of the Environment: 'Vacate the room and ventilate it for at least 15 minutes. Do not use a vacuum cleaner, but clean up using rubber gloves and aim to avoid creating and inhaling airborne dust. Sweep up all particles and glass fragments and place in a plastic bag. Wipe the area with a damp cloth, then add that to the bag and seal it. Mercury is hazardous and the bag should not be disposed of in the bin.'

Poor waste-management strategy, says the company. 'The case for LEDs as a viable lighting technology hasn't been heard, and Greenled now has LEDs that offer the same quality of light as halogens, but without the heat emission, do not contain mercury like CFLs, and are ultimately recyclable.'

According to Daikin UK, you can now think this way in relation to air conditioning. Although fixed air conditioning is not yet covered by the WEEE Directive, it will be

before long, and that is going to prove to be a considerable headache. 'This cannot be ignored,' says Bernard Dehertogh, supply chain manager at Daikin UK. 'The knock-on effect has already led many UK businesses to look at their own operation to see how compliant they are.'

Daikin UK has now devised an end-of-life takeback scheme for fixed air conditioning, which, it says, is a UK first.

Astonishingly, many facilities managers are responsible for food waste and it is a badly managed waste sector. 'The majority of catering waste still goes to landfill – about three million tonnes each year,' says Kate Cawley, business development manager at Cawleys, professional waste managers and recyclers. The Cawleys Food Waste Round is not just for caterers, but for client companies.

'Food is often the overlooked element of corporate waste, but if it is included in a total waste management solution, it can be a way for an organisation to achieve zero landfill,' says Cawley. 'We can accept all types of food waste and have a flexible collection service using cornstarch bags that go in a 360-litre

wheelie bin similar to a domestic one.'

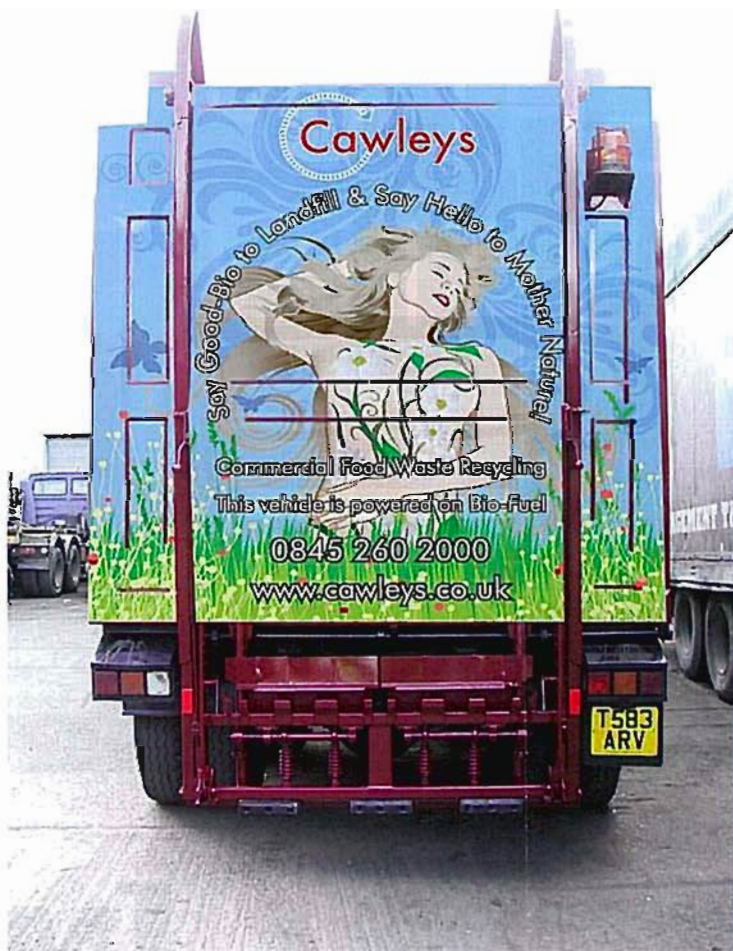
Failing to consider food waste is a significant environmental omission. As food rots it can produce leachate, a toxic liquid capable of considerable groundwater pollution, and methane, which is 22 times more damaging to the environment than CO₂ and yet accounts for around 20 per cent of the UK's gas emissions. Cawleys works on taking this waste and converting it into electricity for the National Grid.

Elsewhere, IMC is working on putting corporate canteen waste into compost. Until now, this was not possible – catering waste needed high-temperature processing to destroy pathogens. However, IMC has now achieved the conversion of food waste to high-grade compost by a different method.

The system was tested by Imperial College, which reported on it in a paper which said: 'Typical food waste is not ideal for production of compost, but the IMC system shows how the problems can be overcome.'

The FM's waste problem may be wider than expected – but then, so are the solutions being devised **fmX**

Recycling on the move: Mother Nature oversees a Cawleys food waste round (right), while Datashred hits the road with its mobile shredders (bottom right)



Further information

- Cawleys www.cawleys.co.uk
- Daikin www.daikin.co.uk
- Datashred www.phs.co.uk/datashred
- Environmental Waste Systems www.ewsl.co.uk
- Greenled www.greenled.co.uk
- IMC www.imco.co.uk
- Mid Sussex recycling www.midsussexwoodrecycling.btik.com
- Mil-tek www.miltek-uk.co.uk
- Sodexo www.uk.sodexo.com

