

# Zero Waste Events Guide

## For Event Organizers

### Diverting Waste in Squamish

Waste reduction is an important part of Squamish's Council Strategic Plan and event organizers play a key role in helping us achieve our waste reduction goals. The Solid Waste Utility Bylaw encourages everyone to reduce their waste by keeping organics and recyclables out of the landfill (this is called waste diversion). This short guide will show you how to comply with the Bylaw and work towards a zero waste event. We know that many people want to align their environmental values with their actions and we want to help.

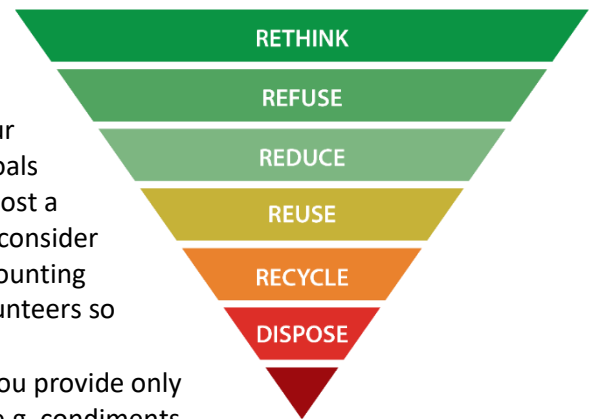


Everyone living, visiting and doing business in Squamish creates waste. Reducing and diverting waste from the Landfill makes economic, social and environmental sense. To find out more, visit: [www.squamish.ca/zerowaste](http://www.squamish.ca/zerowaste)

### Before your event:

There are many things you can do before your event to help reduce waste and ensure proper waste management.

- Set waste reduction/diversion goals (you can base this on your waste audit if you have completed one). For example, your goals may be to redirect 75% of your waste from the landfill or to host a Zero Waste event by diverting 90% of your waste. Be sure to consider how you will measure diversion rates (weighing containers, counting bins, a full waste audit). Communicate your goals to your volunteers so they can help you achieve them.
- Find ways to reduce what you need. For example, what can you provide only by request (e.g. water bottles, straws)? Can you buy in bulk (e.g. condiments, drinks)? Can you prioritize reusable items over single use (e.g. rent cutlery, ask people to bring their own cups and plates)?
- Ask your vendors these waste reduction questions:
  - Do you have environmental or sustainable purchasing policies or criteria?
  - How was the food grown, harvested, or raised?
  - Can you prioritize vegetarian or vegan options?
  - Can you provide reusable containers that are returned after the event?
  - Can single use items (or packaging in general) be avoided? For example, can you use large containers for condiments and beverages instead of individual packets, cans, or bottles?
  - Do you use recyclable or compostable materials? Are your materials accepted in our composting facilities? (Try to avoid "compostable" plastics if possible. Whatever the material, make sure it is ASTM D-6400 certified, FDA approved, and BPI certified compostable in commercial facilities.)
  - Are you able to purchase locally?
  - Do you have a plan to donate surplus food?



**TIP** – Consider the Waste Prevention Triangle in your planning. Try to focus your energy on the green actions (rethink, refuse, reduce). Remember, the best way to deal with waste is to not create it in the first place!

**Local Connection:**  
Do you need to borrow some dishes, cutlery, or cups for your event? Check out **The Squamish Dish Project** on Facebook.

□ Offer training on waste diversion to your volunteers (find resources here: [www.squamish.ca/event-waste](http://www.squamish.ca/event-waste)).

□ Identify the number and locations of waste stations at your event. You will need to consider:

- The type and amount of waste you plan to collect (e.g. will you have more organic waste than garbage? What sized bins will you need for each type of waste?).
- When and where waste will be produced: Will you need organics bins for a dinner? Should you supply refundable recycling bins for drinks? You may need to move bins in and out at different times depending on what your guests will need.
- Recyclables will need to be rinsed and cleaned. Be sure to include rinsing options for your guests (is there a sink close to the recycling bins? If not, what other creative methods can you use to rinse items? A hose? A water bottle? A volunteer?).
- Don't forget about bathrooms! If you are using paper towels, be sure to provide compost bins with clear signage to collect them.
- Make sure your waste stations have clear and adequate signage. You can make your own or even share event signage with other organizers.

**Local Connection:**  
Need waste bins for an indoor event? Squamish Rebuild rents out diversion stations for a small fee. For more info, email: [ed@squamishrebuild.ca](mailto:ed@squamishrebuild.ca)



**Local Connection:**

Waste signage has been standardized across the Sea to Sky Corridor, making it easier for residents and visitors to divert their waste. The signs come in a variety of formats depending on your needs and are free to download and use. Find out more: [www.squamish.ca/event-waste](http://www.squamish.ca/event-waste)



**TIP** – What about compostable or biodegradable plastic liners?

Hoping to do the right thing, many people purchase plastics labeled “biodegradable” or “compostable”. However, these products have many problems when it comes to waste management.

**Biodegradable plastics** eventually break down into smaller pieces of plastic (micro-plastics) and are very challenging to remove from the environment. Because these plastics have chemicals added to help them break down faster, they also cannot be recycled. Therefore, plastics labeled biodegradable belong in the garbage and should never be used in organics bins.

**Certified compostable plastics** eventually break down into organic material. However, they must be heated at a consistently high temperature for a certain period of time in order to do so and many compost facilities are not able to process them. Due to their chemical composition, they also cannot be recycled. As a general rule, plastic “compostable” bags are not accepted in Squamish’s residential organics collection bins so check with the District of Squamish or your hauler before you use them for your event.

## During your event:

Making waste diversion visible and accessible during your event is the key to success.

- Show your waste diversion efforts! Consider using visualizations to communicate what you are doing (e.g. a thermometer display tracking diverted waste, photos on social media, etc.).
- Discourage litter! Consider enacting punitive measures to people who litter (disqualify them from races, remove privileges, etc.).
- Make sure you have volunteers attending your most important or confusing waste stations (e.g. are there some compostable materials that may end up contaminating your recycling? Make sure someone is at the recycling bin to help).
- Squamish is proud to be a provincially certified Bear Smart Community. To avoid conflict with wildlife, be sure all waste bins are locked and secure and serve food indoors or in a centralized area. To find out more, read the [Wildlife Attractant Bylaw](#) or visit: [www.squamish.ca/wildlife](http://www.squamish.ca/wildlife).

## After your event:

Even though your event may be finished, now is the time to evaluate and learn for next time – or pass your learning onto others.

- Consider conducting a final waste audit to understand how much waste you collected and in which streams. Compare this final waste audit with your original waste diversion goals. Did you achieve them? What worked and what didn't? Share what you learned with other events and with the District of Squamish. Improvement is easier when the whole community can pool information and resources to learn lessons from each other.
- Communicate your accomplishments! Even if you didn't achieve your waste reduction goals, you can still share your efforts and lessons learned.
- Consider donating leftover food before you compost. Find out how to donate in the Organics & Recycling Guide for Food Businesses & Organizations (available here: [www.squamish.ca/foodwaste](http://www.squamish.ca/foodwaste)).
- Debrief your event with staff, volunteers, guests, and vendors. Write down what went well and what can be improved - this will help you the next time you run the event.
- Say thank you to everyone who helped contribute to your event's sustainability. Recognize their contributions and celebrate your own achievements.
- Update your waste reduction policies for the next event so that you can learn from your successes and challenges.

**TIP** – Measure your waste diversion rate using this formula: total weight (or bags) of all recycling divided by: total recycling + total weight (or bags) of garbage. Multiply this number by 100 to find your diversion rate (in percentage).

### Local Connection:

Have you collected Refundable containers? Consider connecting with Under One Roof to support Squamish's local food, shelter, and support services. Find out more at: [www.underoneroofsquamish.ca](http://www.underoneroofsquamish.ca)



## Reduce waste in Squamish, together.

Use this checklist to be sure you are in compliance with the Squamish Solid Waste, Sewer Use, Single Use Item Reduction, and Wildlife Attractant Bylaws. You can print this page out and keep it handy as you plan your event's waste management.

### Bylaw Compliance

In order to comply with the above bylaws you must:

- Provide separate bins to collect organics, recyclables, and garbage and properly dispose of this material
- Store wildlife attractants indoors or, if outdoors, in wildlife resistant containers
- Provide educational information to staff, volunteers, and guests about how to separate organics, recyclables, and garbage and how to reduce conflicts with bears
- Post adequate signage in waste areas to help people separate organics, recyclables, and garbage
- Place any garbage destined for landfill in clear, non-coloured, transparent plastic bags (an opaque privacy bag can be used for 10% of total garbage)
- Charge a fee when distributing checkout bags (drive-thrus and take out exempt)
- Distribute plastic straws only if requested

## Love this place, reduce your waste.



For information and resources visit: [squamish.ca/event-waste](https://squamish.ca/event-waste)