

Conducting an Institutional Environmental Audit

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Source: *Rabbi Daniel Swartz, To Till and To Tend*

Conducting an Institutional Environmental Audit <i>At-a-Glance</i>	
Brief Summary:	To help make the “institutional lifestyle” of your synagogue more environmentally responsible and to use the synagogue as a role model to encourage congregants to make their own lifestyles more environmentally responsible.
Audience:	Ages 11-13 Ages 14-17 (High School) Ages 18-21 (College) Adults Family/Community Seniors
Facility:	Community Center Hillel Religious/Day School Synagogue
Program Type:	Advocacy Educational Program Social Activity Other
Issues:	Air/Water/Trees Baal Tashchit/Waste/Recycling Energy/Global Warming <i>Shmittah</i> /Land Use/Agriculture Sustainability <i>Tikkun Olam</i> /Stewardship/Values and Ethics

Description
<p>In order to change the "institutional lifestyle" most effectively, you should put together a small committee to take charge of the environmental audit process. Ideally, the committee should have a combination of paid staff members (including key maintenance staff members if possible), both those in charge of building and grounds and those in charge of programmatic areas, board or budget committee members, a student or member of an education committee, and other lay people with technical expertise in</p>

appropriate areas.

The suggested process for the audit is as follows:

1) Investigation

The first step is to investigate the present status of your institution, as well as the source and cost of various possible solutions. The "Audit Checklist" below covers most of the important questions you will need to answer, although, at an early meeting of the committee, you may want to brainstorm to see if you can come up with any additions. The Checklist also provides resources for finding out about solutions. It is very important to find accurate figures for the costs of the changes you propose, as well as any long-term savings that might result from these changes.

2) Ranking Proposed Changes

Once you have collected the relevant data about your institution's present situation and the costs and benefits of proposed changes, it is important to prioritize these changes. If your institution is typical, you will have come up with many changes, and it is unlikely that all of them will be immediately feasible. It is clear that one, though not the only, criterion for selecting your priorities should be the long-term savings that might result from them. Even when considering cost vs. savings, instead of taking on only those changes that pay for themselves immediately, your institution may want to consider, as have many universities undergoing such changes, that it invest in conservation-oriented changes that have an expected rate of return on investment greater than the current borrowing rate. It should also take into account the cost of an item over its lifetime, because many resource-conservative products, such as compact fluorescent bulbs and energy-efficient computers, are more expensive initially but yield great savings over time.

Ideally, in addition to cost vs. savings, other criteria for assessing priorities should include the importance of the environmental benefits likely to result from the change, and how the change might help the institution serve as a "role model" for its members.

3) Implementation, Evaluation, and Outreach

Once you have set priorities, the audit committee will, of course, need to get approval to make the proposals become realities. But the committee's job does not stop once the first set of changes is in place. Indeed, it is critical for the continued success of these changes that their effect be evaluated, both in terms of environmental benefit and in terms of cost vs. savings. If the audit committee can document concrete savings, it may find that it's easier to win support for future changes, even those that are not as economically compelling.

Part of the evaluation process should be publicizing the changes and their effects to your

entire membership. Again, this helps with future institutional change. In addition, it will encourage your members to use your institution as a role model, and make these changes in their homes. Finally, your committee should work to see that the kind of environmentally-conscious thinking that went into the audit becomes a natural part of your institution's decision-making, so that future programs and purchases, such as new appliances, etc., will keep to the same high environmental standard. This is often the easiest way to save a great deal of energy and money.

Audit Checklist

This audit can be copied and distributed to members of the synagogue and to business and other institutions. Many of the actions in this checklist can be carried out with the help of a local utility company.

(Note: Mention of businesses and nonprofit organizations below is not intended as an endorsement but only as an indication that these businesses have been helpful in the past in providing accurate information about products and possible solutions to achieve desired environmental changes.)

Energy Conservation

- Are the buildings well-insulated and weather-stripped?
- Are there cracked or broken windows?
- Are your lights and appliances energy-efficient
- Are lights and all electrical equipment turned off and/or unplugged when not in use?
- Are electrical appliances used for jobs that could easily be done by hand?
- Are thermostats set at the most efficient levels?
- Are you using automatic thermostats that change settings when buildings are unoccupied?
- Have you recently cleaned and tuned up your heating and cooling systems?
- Have you considered installing renewable energy systems such as solar water heating?

Energy Conservation Resources

- Energy Efficiency in Religious Institutions
U.S. Department of Energy, 1985
The manual, filled with detailed technical information, can be purchased for \$14.95

National Technical Information Service
U.S. Department of Commerce
Springfield, VA 22161
Tel- 202/487-4600

- An Energy Program for Religious Buildings in Six Steps
Enviro-Management & Research, Inc. 1985
This step-by-step manual can be purchased for \$2.00

The Edison Electric Institute
701 Pennsylvania, Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20004-2696

- Saving Energy in Religious Buildings
Ontario Ministry of Energy, 1982
A free booklet which focuses on conservation in churches and synagogues in Canada.

Ontario Ministry of Energy
Publications Services Section
880 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M7AIN8

- Energy Conservation in Religious Buildings
Richard Doll and the University of Wisconsin Dept. of Engineering & Applied Science, 1981
A free booklet on energy conservation.

Wisconsin Division of State Energy
101 S. Webster Street
Madison, WI 53702
Tel- 608/266-8871

- Energy Conservation: A Federation Priority
A guide to energy efficiency assistance programs sponsored by the federal government and private utility companies around the country. Numerous examples and descriptions of successful energy conservation programs implemented by Jewish federations are included. The manual can be purchased for \$5.00

Council of Jewish Federations
1640 Rhode Island Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20002
Tel 202/785-5900

- Most gas and electric utilities will conduct free energy audits for you, and they may even give free or greatly discounted samples of energy saving light bulbs and appliances. For more information on energy-efficient lights and appliances, contact:

American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy

1001 Connecticut Ave, NW, #535
Washington, DC 20036
Tel 202/429-8873

For more information on solar energy products, contact:

The Conservation and Renewable Energy Inquiry and Referral
Service
PO Box 8900
Silver Spring, MD 20907
Tel 1-800-523-2929

Waste Reduction

- Do you use the blank back sides of waste paper for scratch paper?
- Do you try to purchase products without wasteful packaging?
- Do you purchase products that can be recycled?
- Are photocopies two-sided whenever possible?
- Are mailings combined, to save on both paper and postage?
- Do you use coffee mugs rather than Styrofoam cups, durable dishes and silverware rather than disposables?
- Are your in-house memos sent through "electronic mail" or passed around rather than copied for each staff person?
- Do you donate old furniture when remodeling?
- Do you consider buying used furniture instead of new so that additional resources aren't expended?
- Are you purchasing quality products that last, rather than ones that regularly have to be replaced?

Waste Reduction Resources:

- "Safe a Tree" labels that enable you to reuse manila folders and large envelopes are available from:

Friends of the Earth
218 D St., SE
Washington, DC 20003
Tel 202/544-2600

Recycling and Closing the Recycling Loop

- Do you recycle aluminum? Other metal containers? Glass? Plastic containers? Newsprint? White paper? Colored paper?
- Is your recycling system simple enough that it is really used?
- Do you buy recycled products, such as office paper, paper towels, folders, "sticky" notes, even pencils and pens?

- Do you make sure that the products you buy can be recycled once used?

Recycling and Recycled Products Resources

- Among the many companies with extensive recycled product lines are:

Conservatree Paper Co.
10 Lombard St., Suite 250
San Francisco, CA 94111
Tel 415/433-1000

EarthCare Paper, Inc
PO Box 3335
Madison, WI 53704
Tel 608-256-5522

Seventh Generation
10 Farrell St
South Burlington, VT 05403
Tel 802/862-2999

Planting and Landscaping Care

- Do you compost grass clippings, leaves, and yard debris?
- Are you using alternatives to pesticides and chemical fertilizers?
- Are you planting native plants rather than "exotics," which, in addition to frequently needing more water and chemicals to grow, sometimes "escape" and throw ecosystems out of balance?
- Do you water early in the morning to minimize evaporation?
- Have you considered installing a drip irrigation system for outdoor watering?
- In areas with frequent droughts, have you planted drought resistant trees and shrubs? Do you have indoor plants that purify the air and add beauty to your institution?

Planting and Landscape Care resources:

- See Compost program for additional resources and information.
- Most local garden stores now carry composting bins and drip irrigation systems. If yours do not, you can contact:

Water Conservation Systems
Damonmill Square
Concord, MA 01742
Tel 508/369-3951

Water Conservation

- Are there any pipe leaks, leaky toilets, or dripping faucets?
- Are hot water heaters and pipes insulated and are water heaters set on the lowest adequate setting?
- Have faucet aerators been installed to reduce water usage?
- Do you have water-saving spigots on your showers?
- Have you installed low-flow toilets or used "space occupiers" in your toilets to reduce water usage?

Water Conservation Resources:

- Most water utilities will come out to your institution to help you conserve water. For commercial water-saving products, in addition to Water Conservation Systems listed above, you can contact:

Resource Conservation Inc.
 PO Box 71
 Greenwich, CT 06838
 Tel 203/964-0600

Transportation

- Do you encourage employees (including yourself) to use public transportation, carpool, bike, or walk to work?
- Do you provide bike racks or offer financial incentives for utilizing mass transit, instead of providing free parking for individual drivers?
- If your institution owns vehicles, are they well tuned and energy efficient?
- Is carpooling encouraged among your members?
- Is carpooling encouraged among parents in your schools?

Transportation Resources:

- Your local Department of Transportation may be able to provide you with information on how to encourage carpooling. Your mass transit district can provide information on alternatives to driving.

Purchasing

- Are you buying recycled and recyclable goods whenever possible?
- Do you avoid products with wasteful packaging and buy in bulk, which saves both money and resources?
- Are you using fire-extinguishers that contain Halon, which is known to destroy the ozone layer?
- Do you use nontoxic cleaning products?
- Do you use nontoxic paints?

- Do you avoid purchasing products from businesses that are being boycotted for environmental reasons?

Purchasing Resources:

- Purchasing recycled and "environmentally-friendly" products does more than just reduce waste and pollution in your home or synagogue, it helps create a market for these products and promotes research into other similar technologies. See "Household Hazards" program for additional resources and information. For commercial nontoxic cleaning products, contact:

Shakless Corporation
444 Market St
San Francisco, CA 94111
Tel: 415/954-3000

For nontoxic paints, contact:

Sinan Company
PO Box 181
Suisun City, CA 94585
Tel 707/427-2325

For more information on businesses that are buying boycotted for environmental reasons, contact:

Co-op America
2100 M St., NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 10003
Tel 212-872-5307

Investments

- If your institution has funds that it regular invests, or if you are in control of where your institution's pension funds are invested, do you try to invest in "socially responsible" companies?

Investment Resources:

- For guidance on which business investment opportunities are environmentally sound, you may wish to contact:

Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies
711 Atlantic Ave
Boston, MA 02111
Tel 617-451-3252

Many companies now have socially responsible investment funds. Among them are:

Domini Social Index Trst
Six St Jame Ave
Boston, MA 02116
Tel 1-800-762-6814

Social Investments Forum
430 First Ave. N
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Tel 612-333-8338

Working Assets Money Fund
230 California St
San Francisco, CA 94111
Tel 1-800-533-3863

Advocacy

- Is your institution advocating for stronger national environmental laws?
- Is it involved in local environmental issues, including environmental justice concerns?
- Does it share advocacy information with its members?

Programming

- Does your institution reflect its concern for the environment in your worship services?
- In your education programs?
- In your publications?
- In other programming that you undertake?