LESS WASTE

Given that waste management represents 1 percent to 5 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and that hospitals produce an average of 30 pounds of waste per patient per day, waste reduction offers a big opportunity for hospitals. Consider the following:

- Landfilled waste produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas with 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide over a hundred year period.
- Waste incinerators emit more carbon dioxide per megawatt-hour than any other fossil fuel-based power source, including coal-fired power plants, and have been linked to an increased risk of asthma in surrounding communities.
- Approximately 40 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are associated with the energy used to produce, process, transport and dispose of the food we eat and the goods we use.

HealthPartners

HealthPartners has implemented a comprehensive waste reduction program that has resulted in a 14 percent reduction in paper and indirect savings of $1.3 million. The program has diverted 166 tons of food from the trash to compost and recycled 1500 tons of materials in 2016, with 793,000 pounds diverted from the operating room, for a total savings of over $940,000.

INOVA™

Inova implemented a red bag waste reduction program in 2009 that began as a pilot at the Inova Fairfax Medical Campus. The program was expanded across the health system, and in the first year alone, achieved a 14 percent reduction in red bag waste. This was equivalent to 1,000,000 pounds of waste reduced and $200,000 in annual savings from waste removal fees. The program continues today with a focus on stakeholder engagement and alignment with industry best management practices.