waste management solutions

Billions are thrown away each year in scandalous and preventable waste, which also destroys companies' green credentials.

The average British worker uses – and throws away – around 400 disposable plastic cups every year in what's been dubbed one of the great-unreported waste scandals.

This adds up to billions of cups disposed of every year, with a huge majority only ever being used for a couple of sips of water before being discarded, Britain's BusinessWaste.co.uk 's waste management company says.

This preventable behaviour is wrecking the green credentials of companies up and down the country and it costing them money in landfill charges, yet simple ideas could be put in place to stop it, the York-based BusinessWaste.co.uk Company says.

"It is one of the great unreported waste scandals of our time," says Business Waste spokesperson Mark Hall, "And often companies don't even recognise it as a problem."

BusinessWaste.co.uk has found that the average worker, across office, manufacturing and retail sectors will use in the region of two plastic cups every working day. This works out – subtracting weekends, sickness and holidays – at approximately 400 plastic cups per year.

The York-based waste management company found:

- 82% use plastic cups once, then immediately throw them away
- Only 18% will re-use a plastic cup (and 95% of these will throw it out at the end of the day)

Of those who throw their cups in the bin immediately:

- Only 23% will specifically search out a recycling bin
- 70% will use the nearest bin, regardless of the fact if it is for plastic recycling or general waste
- 7% said recycling is "somebody else's problem"

Hall says there's a "blindness" in British companies who don't realise there's a problem with this huge mountain of plastic waste.

"We've seen it with our own eyes," he says, "We've worked with companies who have proudly told us of their green credentials while they automatically grab a plastic cup from the dispenser, drink a mouthful of water, and then throw it into the general waste bin.

"And it's not just limited to water – plastic cups from coffee vending machines are just as bad," Hall says, "while many brands of 'paper' cup are hard to recycle as they come with a waxy lining to keep the water from leaking."

The solutions are simple, and BusinessWaste.co.uk is urging companies to take a look at how they can cut down their plastic waste immediately.

- Encourage workers to drink from glasses, or their own reusable water bottles
- Consider giving workers their own water bottles
- Increase the use of china cups for hot beverages

"These solutions come with their own problems such as washing-up and cleanliness, but this is effectively offset by the huge tonnage of plastic waste that ends up in landfill every year," says BusinessWaste.co.uk's Mark Hall.

If anything, bosses should consider their own bottom line when it comes to wasteful single-use cups:

"Using plastic cups costs companies money, and it's a waste of resources that should – by now – be as socially unacceptable as smoking in a kindergarten class."