

WHAT AM I ABLE TO RECYCLE?

Paper/Cardboard

Most of us use a paper product every day. That's because paper products make up about 71 million tons (or 29%) of the municipal waste stream, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The good news is that more and more Americans are recycling paper. In fact, upwards of 63% (45 million tons) is recycled annually. When you break that number down by population, roughly 334 pounds of paper is recycled for every person in the United States.

Corrugated Cardboard

Currently, about 70% of cardboard-boxes shipped commercially are recovered for recycling. Many of the boxes are themselves made of recycled materials or lumber industry byproducts like sawdust and wood chips. When recycled, cardboard is used to make chipboard like cereal boxes, paperboard, paper towels, tissues and printing or writing paper. It's also made into more corrugated cardboard.

Magazines

Magazines are made from paper that's been buffed and coated to achieve a glossy appearance. Next, the paper is covered with a white clay that makes color photographs look more brilliant. The shiny appearance does not contaminate the paper at all. About 45% of magazines are being recycled today. Recycled magazines are used to make newspaper, tissues, writing paper and paperboard. Recycling just one ton of paper saves enough energy to power the average American home for six months, so don't be afraid to recycle your old magazines. It's the right thing to do.

A Common Misconception: Some consumers think glossy paper can't be recycled. That may have been true in the early days of recycling, but no longer. With today's recycling technology, nearly all community recycling programs accept glossy magazines and catalogs for recycling.

Office Paper

Just over 45% of office paper is recovered for recycling today. High-grade papers, such as white computer paper, bond, and letterhead, can be turned back into office paper if it's kept separate from other waste paper. It can also be used to produce tissue paper, paperboard, stationery, magazines and other paper products. Lower-grade papers, such as newsprint, colored paper, file stock and ground wood papers, are made into cardboard, tissues, newspaper and toilet paper.

Office Tip: If your company generates a large amount of waste paper, consider talking to your local recycling company about whether or not you should sort high-grade papers from lower-grade.

Newspaper

More than 73% of all newspapers in the United States are collected and recycled. The average newspaper today is made of a high amount of recycled fiber. Twenty years ago, newspaper contained only about 10% recycled fiber. Recycled newspapers can be made into cereal boxes, egg cartons, pencil barrels, grocery bags, tissue paper and many other products, including new newspapers. Newspaper is a fine insulator. Using recycled newspapers to produce cellulose insulation is widespread.

Newspapers, Wilderness Restoration and Roadside Planting: Every year natural disasters destroy countless acres of wilderness. The United States Forest Service uses "hydro-mulching," also called "hydro-seeding," to help restore damaged areas. It's a planting process that's been practiced in the United States since the 1950s - and it all starts with newspapers. Recycled newspapers are made into a fiber mulch and mixed with grass seed, fertilizer, green dye, and water to create a "slurry" that can be pumped over broad areas by pressure sprayers, airplanes or helicopters. This process is called "hydro-mulching." It stabilizes roadside dirt for erosion control and is used to reseed grass over broad areas. Highway departments also use it to beautify roadsides by planting wildflower, tree, and shrub seeds.

Paperboard

Once used mainly for products such as breakfast cereal boxes, paperboard is now being used for many other kinds of packaging. Recycled paperboard is made from 100 percent recovered fiber, which may include newspaper, magazines, corrugated boxboard, paperboard folding cartons, and telephone books. One side of the recycled paperboard is usually gray in color. Like glossy magazines, recycled paperboard often includes a coating to improve its printing surface and provide protection from fingerprints. It's still perfectly recyclable. There are more than 80 recycled-paper mills in North America.

Recycle Clean Paperboard: Be sure the paperboard you have is clean and free of food waste. Then recycle it.

