

FACT SHEET



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Recycling Office of Pollution Prevention & Technical Assistance

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Introduction:

- Recycling is the recovery of useful materials, such as paper, glass, plastic, and metals, from the trash to use to make new products, reducing the amount of virgin raw materials needed. Hoosiers generate approximately eight million tons of municipal solid waste every year, much of which can be recycled.
- Recycling is a simple way for citizens to reduce waste, contribute to energy conservation, and preserve natural resources.
- To fully realize the benefits of recycling, three elements must be in balance: collection, manufacturing and buying recycled.

What is involved in recycling?

- Recycling involves:
 - Collecting, sorting and processing materials that would otherwise become waste.
 - Remanufacturing recycled materials into new products.
 - Purchasing products made from recycled materials.
- Common consumer items that are widely accepted at community collection sites and private recyclers include:
 - Paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, aluminum and steel are widely accepted at community recycling programs.
 - Unwanted, obsolete and broken electronics are collected by retailers and other electronics recyclers.
- Recycling and buying recycled goods helps:
 - Reduce the amount of waste materials sent to landfills and incinerators.
 - Create jobs in the recycling and manufacturing industries.
 - Reduce energy needs for the manufacturing of many new products.
 - Conserve water and other natural resources.
 - Reduce pollution generated during the harvesting of raw materials.

Environmental Impacts:

- Recycling paper, glass, plastic, aluminum and steel, tires, electronics and batteries (which contain plastic, lead and other materials), and used oil helps preserve natural resources, conserve energy and water, decrease air emissions generated in manufacturing processes, save landfill space, and prevent pollution.
- E-cycling (recycling electronics) ensures that heavy metals commonly found in electronics (including lead, mercury, cadmium, and hexavalent chromium) are safely managed and that valuable materials (such as steel, glass, and plastic, as well as precious metals such as copper, gold, tin, silicon, and aluminum) are reclaimed for the manufacturing of new products.

What other activities are related to recycling?

In addition to recycling, the following activities also help reduce waste and protect the environment:

- Reducing. As a consumer, determine ways to cut back on the amount of materials you purchase to reduce waste. This could include purchasing materials manufactured with source reduction design, buying in bulk packaging to avoid individual packages, or buying/using less.
- Reusing. This includes purchasing used items, avoiding disposable items, borrowing and sharing items, and donating good used items. It also includes maintaining and repairing products so that they last longer.
- Source reduction. Source reduction is reducing waste at its source. It involves designing products so that less waste is generated when they need to be thrown away. It also includes designing products in a way that the resulting waste is less toxic.
- Composting. Composting involves collecting organic wastes, including yard waste or even food scraps, and managing their natural decay into a rich organic material. Finished compost is used as a natural soil amendment and/or fertilizer. Community and private composting facilities accept yard waste from residents. Many

homeowners have composting areas in their backyards. Composting saves landfill space. Using compost improves soil and plant health, thereby reducing the need for pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

- Household hazardous waste collection. Household hazardous waste (HHW) includes leftover household products that contain corrosive, toxic, ignitable or reactive ingredients. HHW collections help prevent the careless and harmful discard of unwanted drain cleaners, oven cleaners, art supplies, oil-based paint, paint remover, solvents, motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides, mercury-containing light bulbs and pharmaceuticals. Local community programs and private recyclers often accept HHW and offer collections for other items such as mercury-containing devices and unwanted or expired medicines.

Recycling Statistics:

- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) does not currently have a database that enables the tracking of Hoosier recycling activities. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) provides information on recycling's benefits and statistics on municipal solid waste disposal. For example:
 - Recycling 10 aluminum cans is estimated to save enough energy to power a laptop for almost 52 hours
 - Recycling 10 plastic bottles is estimated to save enough energy to power a 60 watt CFL light bulb for almost 100 hours.
 - Almost 27 percent of the trash generated and over 51 percent of the recyclables collected in 2012 was paper. It is used in more than 5,000 paper and non-paper products. Energy saved from recycling one ton would power the average home for six months and conserve about 7,000 gallons of water.
 - According to U.S. EPA's report, *Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2012*, 54 percent of waste was disposed of in landfills, 11.7 percent was combusted (burned) to create energy, and 34.5 percent was recycled. The resulting reduction in carbon emissions is estimated to be more than 168 million metric tons—the equivalent of the greenhouse gases emitted from over 33 million cars. The resulting energy savings is estimated to be more than 1.1 quadrillion BTUs—an amount consumed by almost 10 million households in a year.

IDEM's Role:

IDEM is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while providing for safe industrial, agricultural, commercial and governmental operations vital to a prosperous economy. IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance works with local solid waste management districts, private recyclers, and composting facilities, and helps raise public awareness about the benefits of voluntary recycling and pollution prevention.

Citizen's Role:

- Reduce waste by reusing products whenever possible buying in bulk, and donating items to reuse centers and reusing products whenever possible.
- Purchase products made from recycled material to create a closed circle or loop that ensures the overall success and value of recycling.
- Set aside glass and plastic, aluminum and steel cans, old newspaper, office paper, junk mail and cardboard for recycling.
- Find out if your community has a curbside recycling program, a Pay As You Throw (PAYT) program, drop-off collection sites, or a drive-through recycling center. If your community offers a PAYT program, you may end up paying less for trash, depending on how much you recycle.
- Ask your recycler or waste disposal company what items they accept for recycling.
- Check with your local grocery store to see if they have a plastic film recycling program and the types of bags and packaging they will accept.

Additional Information:

- Learn more about recycling and managing waste materials on IDEM's Recycle Indiana website at www.Recycle.IN.gov.
 - Find out what is recyclable at <http://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/2345.htm>.
 - Find a listing of Indiana's solid waste management districts at <http://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/2340.htm>
 - Find an online calculator to measure the impact of waste at <http://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/2355.htm>.
 - Find information about recycling market development at www.in.gov/idem/recycle/2358.htm.
- Direct questions to IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance, toll free, at (800) 988-7901.