

Waste Reduction Facts

The Mobius Loop, first designed to demonstrate an infinite surface, bodes well in a recycling context to convey the continual use and reuse of materials. The arrows refer to the three kinds of substances of concern to recyclers -- solids, liquids, and gases. The symbol is often used as an outline on products to indicate that they are recyclable. When filled in, it implies that the product is manufactured from recycled material. Look for the Mobius loop on household items, so that they can be properly sorted and removed from the waste stream.

General

- Nova Scotia is the first province to reach its goal of reducing waste by 50% by the year 2000.
- The average Canadian produces about 2 kilograms of solid waste per day, more than almost any citizen in the world.
- Recycling involves three basic steps: separating, processing and returning items to commerce.
- The total time it takes a householder to recycle is a little over two minutes per day.
- Up to one-third of household waste is organic: kitchen scraps, leaves, and grass clippings. This waste could be recycled (composted) into rich humus for your garden.
- Incinerating 10,000 tons of waste creates 1 job; landfilling the same amount creates 6 jobs; recycling the same 10,000 tons creates 36 jobs.
- Recycling can reduce your disposal costs.
- Recycling saves natural and non-renewable resources.

Paper

- 80% of office waste is paper, an average of 57 kg/year per person.

- Using recycled paper in paper production reduces energy usage by 4500 KW/tonne and air pollution emissions by 30 kg/ tonne.
- In 1991, 1/3 of Canadian waste paper for paper production was imported -- 17,000 truckloads full.
- In Canada, an area of forest the size of Vancouver Island is cut down every four years to meet the demand for paper products.
- 40,000 trees are cut down eachday just to produce the newsprint for Canada's daily papers.
- One tonne of recycled bond paper saves about 68 trees.
- One family's yearly supply of newspapers can be recycled into enough insulation for one house.
- Soiled paper (e.g. wet newspaper) can be composted.

Glass

- The energy saved by recycling one glass bottle will light a 100 watt bulb for four hours.
- Sand, limestone and soda ash are used in the production of glass.
- Refillable glass bottles are used approximately 15 times before being melted down to make new bottles.
- Glass can be recycled indefinitely.
- Nature can reduce a tin can to dust in 100 years, and an aluminum can in 500 years, but a glass bottle takes one million years.
- The bottle-making plant in Scoudouc, New Brunswick, can operate on 100% recycled glass.

Aluminum

- Studies show energy savings of up to 95% when cans are made from recycled aluminum instead of virgin materials.
- Aluminum is the most expensive recyclable item in the household waste stream.
- Recycled aluminum is an indispensable supply source for aluminum producers and fabricators.
- 89% of beverage cans in Canada are aluminum.
- Canadians recycle 1.5 billion aluminum cans/year.
- Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to light one 100 watt bulb for 20 hours or run a TV for 2 hours.

Steel ('Tin') Cans

- Canadians discard 1,500 tonnes of steel everyday in food and drink cans.

- When scrap iron is used instead of iron ore to make steel, mining wastes are reduced by 97%, air pollution effluents by 80%, and water pollution by 76%.
- One tonne of recycled steel saves the energy equivalent of 3.6 barrels of oil and 1.49 tonnes of iron ore over the production of new steel.
- The tin content in 'tin' cans is equivalent to about 2.26 kilograms per tonne of cans.

Plastics

- Plastics can take between 100 and 400 years to break down in a landfill.
- PET bottles can be recycled into carpet backing, paint brushes, scouring pads, appliance handles, floor tiles, automotive parts, fibrefill for pillows, sleeping bags and ski jackets.
- Five recycled PET bottles makes enough fibrefill to stuff a ski jacket.
- Polystyrene foam can be recycled into insulation board for commercial construction, home and office products and cafeteria trays.
- There are 7 classes of plastic products, identified by type and recyclability (take a look at shopping bags).
- 490 million plastic bags a year are used in Atlantic Canada.

Waste Reduction in Action

Practicing the 3 R's -- reduce, reuse, and recycle -- is something we can do at home and in the business place to help contribute to waste reduction and develop a more sustainable society. The Kent Co-op in New Minas, Nova Scotia has phased in the following programs to make environmental practices part of normal store routine.

- Shelf tags identify products that can be re-used, conserve energy, use recycled materials, or are biodegradable and non-toxic.
- Local farmers and mink ranchers take the store's food waste; meat by-products are ground up and fed to the minks and vegetables are either fed to farm animals or composted.
- Alternatives to plastic grocery bags are promoted: a re-usable, washable cotton bag and a collapsible plastic container which fits easily into a car's trunk. Cardboard boxes are also available to carry the groceries.
- Kent Co-op sells bulk windshield washer fluid so members can refill plastic containers instead of throwing them away, thus producing less waste.