

FACT SHEET



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Recycling

Office of Program Support

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Introduction:

- Recycling is the recovery of useful materials, such as paper, glass, plastic, and metals, from trash to be used to make new products, reducing the amount of virgin raw materials needed. Hoosiers dispose of approximately 6 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: collecting, 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 recycling programs include paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, aluminum, and steel.
- 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.
 - Support investments in local communities.

Environmental Impacts:

- Recycling items like paper, glass, plastic, aluminum, steel, tires, electronics, 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.
- Reduces energy needs for the manufacturing of many new products.
- Conserves water and other natural resources.
- Reduces pollution generated during the collecting and processing of raw materials.

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 homeowners who do not have composting areas in their backyards. Composting saves landfill space, reduces greenhouse emissions, and supports soil conservation. 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 Reporting:

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) provides a summary of the information collected from municipal solid waste recyclers, which are mandated to report their annual recycling activity. The report presents an overview of state recycling reporting and data collection methods, data results, and reviews the state's progress toward meeting a 50 percent recycling goal. Copies of these reports can be found [here](#).

Recyclers are required to submit reports to IDEM on the amount and type of recyclables they process from Indiana's waste stream. In general, this includes a recyclable materials broker; an owner or operator of a solid waste disposal facility at which recycling occurs; the owner or operator of a material recovery facility; and a solid waste management district.

Recyclers may report voluntarily if they are a scrap metal processor, such as an automotive salvage recycler or rebuilder; or a person who took action to recover materials that were not municipal waste for purposes of use or reuse; conversion into raw materials; or use in the production of new products. This would also include manufacturing facilities or retailers, who have off-site shipments of recyclables.

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 Program Support 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.
- Check out local curbside recycling program, a Pay As You Throw (PAYT) program, drop-off collection sites, or a drive-through recycling center. Communities offering a PAYT program, may end up charging less for trash, depending on how much is recycled.

- Find out what items are accepted locally for recycling.
- Check with the local grocery store to see if it has a plastic film recycling program and the types of bags and packaging accepted.

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 information on Indiana's solid waste management districts at <http://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/2340.htm>
- Direct questions to IDEM's Office of Program Support at (317) 232-8172 or (800) 988-7901 (toll free within Indiana).

