

Trash Talk!

A quarterly newsletter from
Pierce County
Solid Waste Division



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“Buy Recycled” and You Complete the Recycling Loop



Most of you have seen the three “chasing arrows” of the recycling symbol. But do you know what they mean? Each arrow stands for a step in the process that completes the recycling loop:

1. Picking up the recyclables
2. Turning the recyclables into new products
3. Buying products made from recycled content and recycling them again

1. Collection: The cart is the place to start!

It's your recycling pick-up day. You've moved your recycling cart to the curb or taken your recyclables to a collection center. Way to go! You've kept all those recyclables from going to the landfill, so what happens next?

Once inside the recycling truck, everything is taken to a material recovery facility where it is dumped onto a conveyor belt to be sorted. Magnets grab the steel cans, other equipment sorts out the paper, and pick-line workers further sort the heavier or bulkier stuff, such as magazines, phone books, plastics, cardboard, and non-recyclable materials.

The separated materials are then packaged into bales and shipped to other factories where they will be turned into new products.



2. Manufacturing: Where old becomes new.

Paper Takes Many New Forms — Once the paper from your recycling carts has been sorted, it is sent to a paper mill. The paper is mixed with water and chemicals to make pulp. The pulp is then cleaned and moves on to the paper machine to be made into new paper.

Next time you go shopping, look for recycled content in new boxes, newspapers, paper towels, diapers, egg cartons, cat litter, wallpaper, and even your school paper. *Think about this:* The paper you're reading this on may have been someone else's Macaroni & Cheese box.



Aluminum Cans Back on Shelf in 90 Days — Aluminum beverage cans are one of the most successful recyclables. Used cans are shipped to manufacturing plants where they are shredded into potato chip-sized pieces. These pieces are then melted into molten aluminum. Some of the aluminum is turned into blocks for use in making car and bike parts. Some is rolled into 5-mile-long coils and cut and formed into new cans. An aluminum can recycled today will be back on the grocery store shelf in about 90 days.

Steel Is Always Recyclable — Almost every steel product you buy today—from soup cans to bicycles and cars—has recycled steel in it and is completely recyclable. Huge magnets, some powerful enough to pick up your school bus, help separate the steel. After it is separated, they crush it and send it to a steel mill. At the mill, they melt it and form it into new products. Steel can be recycled forever without affecting its strength. *Think about this:* The ravioli can you put into your recycling cart may become part of your next bike.



Plastic, Plastic Everywhere — Plastic found in soft drink, water, mouthwash, and shampoo bottles is a material called Polyethylene Terephthalate. Say what? You can call it PET for short. Once washed, shredded, and formed into small plastic pellets, this PET is easily melted into fine thread-like fibers and used in carpet, clothing, and fiberfill for pillows and sleeping bags. Other plastics like that from milk jugs and laundry detergent jugs are also washed, shredded, and melted into pellets. This plastic is called High-Density Polyethylene, or HDPE, and is used to make plant pots, drain pipes, car parts, toys, plastic lumber for decks and benches, and many other things that you may already use.

Glass Returns to Its Finest Form — Glass collected from Pierce County's drop-off sites is put directly into shipping containers and sold. Some glass is ground back into sand. The recycled sand can be used for sandblasting, melted and blown into fiber that makes fiberglass insulation, or remade into new bottles and jars. Some glass is mixed with concrete to be used in roads and sidewalks.



3. Purchasing: It's your turn to close the loop!

When you buy products that are made from recycled materials, you are showing manufacturers that protecting the Earth's resources and recycling are important to you. As more and more of us buy recycled-content products, manufacturers will continue to buy and use the recyclable materials that we put into our recycling carts.

Waste Free Gifts— Show You Care

Looking for eco-friendly gift ideas? Check out Pierce County's new website, www.WasteFreeGifts.com. This site is designed to help make it easier to give gifts that show you care about your family, friends, and the environment. Starting December 1, www.WasteFreeGifts.com will help you prepare for your next celebration, whether it's a birthday, anniversary, graduation, or the winter holidays. You'll find eco-friendly gifts for all occasions, wrapping alternatives, and smart ideas that save money.

Waste-free giving can be part of your healthy lifestyle, like recycling, living by a budget, and eating balanced meals. Your visit to www.WasteFreeGifts.com shows you care about how your choices impact your loved ones and the environment.



Gifts that show you care

- Give experiences like a movie, museum, concert, or sports tickets.
- Give a garden, including seeds, gloves, tools, etc.
- Create a family recipe box, cookbook, or a photo album.
- Everyone loves cookies! Make a batch of your favorite



cookies, place them in a big jar or tin, and tie it up with some leftover ribbon or fabric.

Gifts to avoid

- Over-packaged, resource-consuming gifts
- Plastic or electric gadgets with limited use
- Disposable products

Be a Recycling Detective

A good place to begin is in the supermarket. Clues are everywhere. Check labels. Commit yourself to reading environmental labels and buying recyclable and recycled products or products packaged in recycled materials. Check labels on boxes of cereal, cookies, and crackers. Check canned goods and food in glass containers. Check detergents and cleaning supplies in plastic containers. In fact, start checking all labels on all the items you buy. Good detective work will uncover dozens of packages made from recycled materials.

Make an effort to look for recycling information printed on packages. You might be surprised to find that even with products you buy on a regular basis you've been "buying recycled." Most manufacturers that use cans and glass in their packaging already use recycled materials.

Some labels are small and some large. Some appear on side panels; others appear on the flaps of a box or carton. Although there is no standard or universal symbol, many companies use chasing arrows.

Here are some examples of symbols and what they mean:



A container or package marked with this symbol was manufactured with at least some materials that have been recycled. Sometimes, additional information is written next to the symbol, such as "Printed on recycled paper" or "Post-consumer content."

A percentage inside the recycled-content symbol tells you how much of the product's raw materials came from recycled materials.



A third "recycled" symbol is also in use. This symbol differs from the first two because it has solid black or colored arrows within an outer circle. The outer circle indicates that at least some content came from recycled material.

In recent years, this logo has been adopted for use on paperboard, such as cereal and snack boxes. This shows that the container was made from 100-percent recycled paperboard.



This logo means that cardboard can be recycled.