

Waste Management Myth Busters



RESIDENTIAL VS. PRIVATE COLLECTION

Myth: Residential and private / commercial collections are the same if collected within the same municipality

- Residential collection differs from one municipality or region to another. The main reason is facilities. The City of Toronto, for example, uses recycling facilities that are different than that of Mississauga. Each material has one or more 'end uses' that require processing technology, provide a certain price for it, and physical sorting facilities.
- Commercial collection varies as well. Each building signs its own contract with a waste management company. Every company uses its own facilities and has a series of contracts with recycling facilities in the province, within Canada and internationally.

EXAMPLE: ALUMINIUM FOIL

Municipal collection typically includes aluminium foil for recycling, but the same material is not accepted at work. The small amounts collected in an office environment are too small to process. Solution: If you bring foil, take it back home for recycling.

COMPOSTABLE MATERIALS

Myth: Materials labelled compostable are safe for the organics bin

- Compostable materials were not invented for the organics bin. Originally developed in Europe, biodegradable, plant-based materials were manufactured as 'landfill friendly'. While decomposition is extremely slow in landfills due to oxygen-free environment (anaerobic), the non-synthetic materials will not leach out chemicals.
- The best option is to try and reduce overall waste by bringing a reusable mug and a food container.

DID YOU KNOW? LANDFILLS ARE NEAR OXYGEN FREE ENVIRONMENTS!

"Typically in landfills, there's not much dirt, very little oxygen, and few if any microorganisms," says green consumer advocate and author Debra Lynn Dadd. She cites a landfill study conducted by University of Arizona researchers that uncovered still-recognizable 25-year-old hot dogs, corncobs and grapes in landfills, as well as 50-year-old newspapers that were still readableⁱ.



CROSS CONTAMINATION

Myth: Mixing paper with food or beverage containers can still be recycled

Contamination can prevent recyclables from being processed. Recycling is the mechanical process of turning used materials into new ones. Contamination refers to the presence of recyclables in the garbage stream or, conversely, residual waste materials in a recycling stream.

PAPER...

If paper is combined with food or beverage, it cannot be recycled. The paper fibers are not able to separate from the oils during the pulping process.

RECYCLABLES IN GARBAGE...

While the recycling stream – paper, cans, bottles, glass – are physically sorted by machines and people, whatever is sent to the trash bin, is headed to landfill and cannot be recovered.

100% RECYCLABLE MATERIALS

Myth: Products labeled “100% recyclable material” can be recycled all the time

- The label “100% recyclable material” is misleading. Why? Because recycling varies by location. It is more correct that an item may be recyclable where facilities exist.
- A product may also be made of recyclable components but not as a single unit.

EXAMPLE:

Binders are made of materials that when separated each part is recyclable. But together, when the binder is intact, it is destined to landfill.

WHY?

Because if it remains intact (as one piece) it will not be manually separated at the recycling facility, which is largely automatic.



Cover: plastic and cardboard – recyclable



Metal rings – recyclable



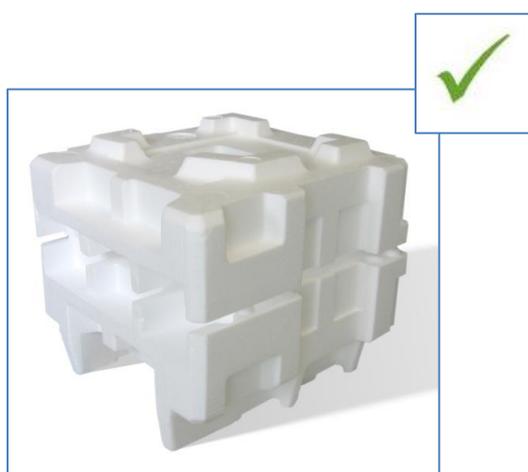
POLYSTYRENE

Myth: all types of polystyrene are recyclable

Polystyrene is mostly known as Styrofoam. As a packaging material it is denser and is used to protect electronic items when packaged. Polystyrene as a clean, dense packaging material can be recycled. However, as a food container, it is too thin and is typically 'contaminated' with food to enable processing.

LESSON:

If polystyrene is used for food take out it is not recyclable.



MORE INFORMATION

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END NOTES

ⁱ Earth Talk. (2016). Do Biodegradable Items Really Break Down in Landfills? Most landfills are too tightly packed to work well <http://environment.about.com/od/recycling/a/biodegradable.htm>