

RECYCLE...YOU HAVE A GREATER IMPACT THAN YOU THINK!

Do you ever wonder what happens when you put your plastic bottles on your curb for recycle pickup?

Or when you drop off the stack of newspapers to your recycling center?

Some of the Conservancy staff took a tour of Cogle's Recycling Center in Hamburg for a closer look.

Recycling is a pretty simple concept: take something that isn't useful anymore and make it into something new instead of just throwing it away. It can be anything from recycling printer paper into cardboard paper, to making an alternative fuel source from number 4-7 plastics.

Thanks to Bob Cogle, we had a "behind-the-scenes" look at what happens at his recycling center and how individuals can make a difference. When you walk into Cogle's Recycling Center, you see towers of paper, cardboard, plastic, and metal. All of it being separated, sorted, and bundled for distribution.

Where is it going next, I asked? All over the world.

Recycling is a commodity. Most of the paper and plastic from the East Coast is sold world wide - United States, China, Korea, India. It is then made into new material again. At Cogle's Recycling, everything is sorted, garbage is removed and the material is bundled into stacks for easy transport. The paper is separated by hand on a conveyor belt. The plastics are separated with a computerized air processor that know which number each plastic container is by weight. Once everything is separated, the bundles are shipped out to be processed for a new material.

What new material and how is it done?

Cardboard and all kinds of paper is pulped and blended with new pulp from wood chips. The pulp is screened, rolled and dried into more paper. For example, newspaper can become egg cartons, paper plates, telephone directories, countertops, kitty litter, building insulation and new newspaper, just to name a few. Cardboard can become paper bags and new cardboard. Notebook paper can be manufactured into facial tissue, toilet paper, paper towels, napkins and new notebook paper.



Aluminum scrap is ground into small chips before being melted and cast into ingots. The ingots are sent to manufacturing plants where they are molded or rolled into sheets that can be shaped into various products. Aluminum cans are 100% recyclable and turned into new aluminum cans in as little as 60 days.

Plastics need to be sorted by type - Numbers 1-7. The plastic may be shredded, baled, or chipped before it is shipped to the re-processing plant. This material is then melted and remolded into new products such as carpet, polar fleece clothing, buckets and containers, stadium seats, plastic lumber and playsets.



Glass is broken down into small pieces called cullet. Magnets, screens and vacuum systems remove metals, labels, bits of plastic, and caps. The cullet is blended with silica sand, soda ash and limestone. The mixture is melted and blow-molded into new glass containers.

What tips can you tell individuals and homeowners about recycling?

The answer was surprising. "Individuals have more of an impact in the recycling effort. Businesses have more regulations and rules compared to a regular person." A homeowner can throw away recyclable products with no repercussions. Also, READ the Recycling Guide that you receive in your municipal newsletter or at the drop off center. Answers such as whether you rinse, take lids off, what to recycle and other regulations can be answered there.

