

## Beyond the Bin

by Sarah Grimm, Waste Reduction Specialist, Lane County Public Works

Supplying industry with raw materials without destroying earth's environment is possible when citizens "recycle it all and recycle it right." Curbside recycling makes a huge impact on the environment by providing many thousands of tons of raw materials to local and distant manufacturing plants, which in turn allows them to use less energy and produce less pollution. *However, curbside programs do not, and cannot be expected to, **recycle it all.***

In fact, co-mingled recycling programs are experiencing significant problems due to contamination caused by carelessness or wishfulness, or both. Because the bins are so big and the instructions are so simple, many citizens are tempted to toss everything in the bin. But paper mills in the Pacific NW are encountering devastating increases in damage to their equipment due to glass incorrectly placed in co-mingled bins. A wide array of miscellaneous plastics and bags, incorrectly placed in commingled recycling bins, clog the conveyor sorting systems or get caught between papers and boxes. Baled and sent to the paper plant, they clog filters and machines that would otherwise be making great paper from old paper.

The first rule to "recycle it all and recycle it right" is to give recyclers only what they say they collect for recycling. Next, make sure all food and other debris has been removed from the material. In a commingle system materials are sorted after collection. In most cases though, any paper intended to stay strong when wet is NOT recyclable. Paper towels and tissues, paper cups, paper plates, food (wet food) containers, etc; these are NOT recyclable.

Avoid nesting materials with unlike materials because they will be less likely to be correctly sorted by automated or hand sorting processes. For example if several plastic yogurt tubs are jammed inside of a paperboard cereal box they may not get separated and would end up becoming a waste product of a paper recycling process. The contamination rates are causing financial and operational hardships, and threaten the future of recycling.

Your curbside bin (or commingled recycle bin at a transfer station) is for rigid plastic containers, not everything plastic under the sun. The only plastic that should go in your curbside bin is a bottle, tub, jug or jar. Look at the SHAPE first—no trays, no cups, no bags, no clear blister packaging, no deli or to-go containers—ONLY bottles tubs, jugs and jars are ok.

Because mechanical equipment sorts flat papers from the containers, it is very important to keep tin cans, plastics and cartons in their original dimensional shape. If space allows do not flatten anything, if it does not, only flatten paper boxes. And remember, glass **MUST** be set out separately.

Here's a list that will help you recycle the rest of "it all."  
Do NOT place the following items in your curbside bin.

**Plastic block Styrofoam and packing peanuts:** Packing Peanuts can be taken to any mailing service stores or check various materials exchanges like craigslist or freecycle, that may list artists and nonprofits wanting packing peanuts. [St Vincent de Paul accepts block foam](#) at three locations: Seneca and Division stores in Eugene and the Thurston store on Main Street in Springfield. There is no cost for small residential quantities, for commercial quantities they may charge a small fee to cover costs. For more information about recycling larger quantities call (541) 743-7191. Styrofoam cups, meat trays and etc. are NOT recyclable.

**Plastic Bag and film wraps:** Includes plastic 6-pack rings. No zip top bags or “saran” type food wraps. Nothing with food contamination accepted. Most grocery stores have bag recycling programs, and Lane County Transfer Stations accept bags and film (541-682-4120 or [www.lanecounty.org/waste](http://www.lanecounty.org/waste)). International Paper is very interested in commercial quantities of all sorts of plastic, call 541-744-4100. And so is AgriPlas, 503-390-2381. Reuse is always best, if you’re a dog owner, leave some behind for other people to use next time you’re at the dog park.

**Durable Plastics:** *Update: with current market conditions, consumer collected plastics cannot compete with low fuel, prices, the strong dollar and other forces that have reduced values. Local plastics recyclers mentioned here are only able to consider commercial quantities of these materials.* International Paper accepts durable plastics such as buckets and barrels, toys and play structures, patio furniture and Rubbermaid, greenhouse and garden plastics. There may be options in the Portland area that we do not have here. If you travel to Portland for other reasons, call the Metro Recycling Hotline, 503-234-3000.

**Plastic CDs and jewel cases Video and Cassette tapes:** *Update: with current market conditions, it is harder to recycle these.* Never hurts to ask though: NextStep Recycling (10<sup>th</sup> and Garfield Eugene) 541-686-2366. Saint Vincent de Paul 541-345-0595, Garten Services, 541-868-1550. If you travel to Portland for other reasons, call the Metro Recycling Hotline, 503-234-3000.

**Small Appliances (i.e. toasters, vacuums, etc):** Take all items (working or not) to St. Vincent de Paul, they will be processed for recycling if not appropriate for reuse. 541-687-5820. Lane County Transfer Stations have a scrap metal bin that accepts such items as long as they are 75% metal and contain no fluids.

**Shoes:** Drop off at any Goodwill or St. Vincent de Paul collection center. Like clothing, shoes are recycled on international markets if not selected for reuse.

**Fluorescent bulbs:** Compact fluorescent bulbs and tubes less than 4 ft. can be returned to most lighting and hardware stores in the Eugene/Springfield area. Check the Household Hazardous Waste page of the lane county website for the current list of locations at <http://www.lanecounty.org/lamps> or call 541-682-3111 for a disposal appointment.

**Oil and Grease:** Sequential Biofuels will accept all liquid vegetable oils rancid or not at their gas stations on McVay Hwy near 30<sup>th</sup> Ave, and at 18<sup>th</sup> and Chambers in west Eugene; for more information at 541-736-5864, <http://www.sqbiofuels.com/>. For commercial pick up of cooking oil and grease contact EC Restaurant Supply at 541-995-6025.

**Batteries:** All Lane County transfer stations accept not only car batteries, but household button and all rechargeable, or disposable lithium batteries. Many local electronics and Radio Shack stores will collect them as well. Keep in mind, *Alkaline Batteries (AAA - D) sold in Oregon after 1996 are ok as garbage*, but all others should be delivered to the above locations for recycling.

**Windows:** Window glass is not recyclable at this time. Windows in their frames along with other reusable construction materials may be accepted at BRING Recycling [www.bringrecycling.org](http://www.bringrecycling.org) (541) 746-3023 or the new Habitat for Humanity’s Restore, 541-344-4809.

**Mattresses:** St. Vincent de Paul recycles old mattresses into new mattresses, dog beds and wood, metal and fiber commodities. Small fee, (less than the cost to landfill) 541-687-5820.

**Electronic equipment:** It is against state law to dispose of TVs, computers, monitors and laptops in the garbage. Lane County participates in the state-wide collection program for E-Cycles, offering FREE recycling to anyone with 7 or fewer *intact* items at five Lane County's transfer sites: Glenwood, Cottage Grove, Veneta, Florence and Vida. Other miscellaneous electronics, such as VCRs, DVD players, video game units, phone related equipment, printers and other computer related equipment, are not banned from landfills, but are included in our collection program as a service to our citizens. All Goodwill stores also accept 7 or fewer items (541) 345-1801. Anyone with 8 or more units or have dismantled items, can contact one of the two local electronics processors: Garten Services (541) 868-1550, NextStep Recycling (541) 686-2366. NextStep <http://www.NextSteprecycling.org/> accepts miscellaneous electronics and computer related equipment including manuals and software. NextStep also offers computer repair services.

**Cell Phones:** Working Cell Phones are accepted by Woman Space (541) 485-8232. Phones are given to survivors of domestic violence for emergency 911 calls. Cell phones are also accepted at NextStep, all St. Vincent de Paul locations and at Lane County transfer stations that accept electronics.

**Glasses and Hearing Aids:** The Oregon Lions Sight and Hearing Foundation accepts donations of glasses and hearing aids at Key Bank, 725 A Street, Springfield <http://www.orlions.org/> (800-635-4667).

**Carpet padding, old pillows, cushions and foam:** Keep dry. St Vincent De Paul stores, 541-687-5820.

**Books and magazines:** Drop off at any St. Vincent de Paul collection center. Whatever they cannot reuse in their stores, they will recycle to local markets.

**Art Supplies:** Material Exchange Center for Community Arts (MECCA) accepts used art supplies and other used items including scrap fabrics, calendars, greeting cards, buttons, candles that may be repurposed in art work. Call (541) 302-1810 or visit the website for a comprehensive list of materials they will accept <http://www.materials-exchange.org/>.