



RECYCLING DOESN'T END AT THE CURB!

Industry perspectives

By Patti Lynn, Recycling Resources Manager

You gave your food cans and bottles a good rinse, stored them in a container separate from your household trash, and tossed in your clean mixed paper. You placed the recycling cart at the curb on collection day. Congratulations, you've recycled! Or have you?

Well, not exactly. You're doing the right thing, but it's just the first step in the recycling process – the "set out." Next, the hauler collects it, transports it to a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) for sorting and baling. These commodities will be marketed to a paper mill, plastics broker, or metal recycler to eventually be manufactured into new products.

Recycling is a process. Residents are the first step. So, who better to teach us about the processing other than MRF managers?

Jeff Furmanchin of Total Recycle in Birdsboro wants us to know, "*Contamination* in single stream recyclables is the largest cause of downtime and damage to processing equipment. Please keep hoses, wires, construction debris and yard waste out of your recycling. Lithium-Ion or rechargeable batteries of any type need to stay out of recycling and trash bins, as they are an enormous fire hazard." (These batteries only belong in a household hazardous waste collection program!)

Scott Mengle, Director of SECCRA Landfill, manages a dozen drop off bins across southern Chester County. He says, "Just because an item bears a recycling symbol doesn't guarantee its actual recycling. This poses financial and logistical challenges, as non-recyclable items disrupt sorting, increase costs, and devalue recycled materials. To preserve the financial and environmental sustainability of recycling programs, it's important to know what is truly recyclable. 'When in doubt, throw it out' to ensure our success."

Matt Cogle of Cogle's Recycling wants us to know that water bottles (PET #1) are recycled into carpet and clothing. PET is also re-made into new bottles, closing the recycling loop. "It starts in your home. Keep food, liquids, and cigarette butts out of bottles. They make recycling much harder. Get those clean and loose (not bagged) bottles in the cart!"

Better to recycle right, than to recycle more. When in doubt, check it out! Let's get Trash Smart!

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