



Langsdale Recycling Division

Environmental Facts

- The world's largest waste oil processing plant is located in East Chicago, Indiana. The facility recycles 75 million gallons per year of crankcase and industrial oil and 20 million gallons per year of oily wastewater.
- Recycling paper uses 60 percent less energy than manufacturing paper from virgin timber.
- Every year, we make enough plastic film to shrink-wrap the state of Texas.
- If everyone in the U.S. recycled their Sunday newspaper, it would save 500,000 trees every week.
- Each year Americans send 24 million tons of lawn clippings, leaves, and tree and shrub cuttings to landfills. In so doing, it takes up about 20 percent of our landfill space.
- Every day Americans use enough steel and tin cans to make steel pipe running from Los Angeles to New York and back again.
- Seventy-six percent of Americans consider themselves environmentalists.
- When a product is recycled and then reused as a new product, the recycling loop has been closed. Glass is 100% recyclable, and can be used over and over with no loss in quality. The process of creating new glass from old is also extremely efficient, producing virtually no waste or unwanted byproducts.
- In 1990, the aluminum industry recycled a record 55 billion aluminum cans representing 63.9 percent of those used by consumers.
- Americans throw away enough used motor oil every year to fill 120 supertankers.
- The average American throws away about 3.5 pounds of garbage per day. About 40% of it is paper products.
- Lead-zinc mines dug by the Romans in Wales are still a source of groundwater pollution nearly 2,000 years since their first use.

- Since 1000 AD, world population has tripled, while fossil fuel use has grown tenfold.
- Out of a barrel of crude oil, you can get 2.5 quarts of virgin motor oil, while it takes only a gallon of used motor oil to get the same amount of high quality motor oil.
- We throw away enough iron and steel to continuously supply all the nation's automakers.
- Americans receive almost 4 million tons of junk mail every year. Most of it winds up in landfills.
- Every year, the U.S. and Canada chop down 34 million Christmas trees - enough to cover the state of Rhode Island with a forest.
- Recycling a glass jar saves enough energy to light a 100-watt light bulb for four hours.
- A dripping faucet can waste up to 2,000 gallons of water a month. That's equal to 24,000 gallons/year and who knows how much in utility costs wasted down the drain.
- Seventy percent of all water used by humans worldwide is for irrigation.
- American consumers and industry throw away enough aluminum to rebuild our entire commercial air fleet every three months.
- One-half of the world's population cooks with wood or charcoal.
- If you stacked all the refrigerators Americans buy in a single week, you'd have a tower more than 80 miles high.
- Rainwater washing off urban pavement can be shockingly polluted.
- Sixty percent of the world's lead supply comes from recycled batteries.
- Every day, American families produce an estimated 4 million pounds of household hazardous waste (nail polish, paint thinner, batteries, etc.)
- Fifty U.S. states dispose of toxic waste in another state.
- Enough hazardous waste is generated in one year to fill the New Orleans Superdome 1,500 times over.
- Not only does recycling paper reduce waste, it also saves energy. Making one ton of recycled paper uses only 60 percent of the energy needed to make a ton of virgin paper.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the U.S. has lost about 60 acres of wetlands per hour for the past 200 years.

- Sewage treatment plants are essentially bacteria farms. The living bacteria breakdown the wastes in the sewage. The result is water that contains useful nutrients that can then be released into rivers or reservoirs safely. Modern multi-step water treatment techniques can even return wastewater to drinking water quality if necessary.
- Americans use 50 million tons of paper annually -- consuming more than 850 million trees.
- One ton of recycled paper saves 17 trees.
- By recycling all of your newspapers for one year, you alone can save four trees, 2200 gallons of water, and fifteen pounds of air pollutants!
- Paper recycling uses only one fourth to three quarters of the energy used to produce paper from raw materials, and half as much water.
- Recycled paper is useful in the production of cereal boxes, newsprint, cardboard, tissue paper, wallboard, and the bases for writing pads.
- The only negative side to paper recycling is that the bleaching process used to clean the paper creates pollutants.
- If every newspaper printed just for one Sunday edition for the New York Times were to be recycled, we would save 75,000 trees.
- **Aluminum cans:** These cans take a lot of energy to be made from scratch. If you recycle soda cans, the energy used and air pollution is cut by 95% than the production of cans from pure bauxite. Each soda can recycled saves energy equal to half a can of gasoline!
- **Steel cans:** These cans, just in U.S. landfills, weighed about 2.5 million tons in 1986. These cans have an outer coating of tin, which is very expensive and imported into the U.S. This tin can be recovered and resold, or used to make new cans. The steel can should also be reclaimed.
- **Glass bottles:** Glass bottles comprise 8% of our garbage. Two types of glass bottles are manufactured--refillable and nonrefillable. The reusable type is heavier and sturdier, and just needs a thorough cleaning for it to be recycled up to thirty times. The other type, which is nonreusable, can be melted with raw materials to produce new glass bottles. However, this option requires a lot of energy, so the refillable bottles are preferable.
- **Plastics:** Plastics make up 7% of our waste by weight, but a shocking 32% by volume! Plastics take hundreds or thousands of years to decompose, so they are essentially permanent in the landfills. Plastic is currently made from petroleum and natural gas, but future plastics are most likely to come from plant and animal matter.

- **Yard wastes:** Organic wastes make up 1/5 of the garbage flow, which is about 28 million tons every year. Instead of being thrown out, yard waste can be composted to make nutrient rich soil.
- The United States generates more garbage than anywhere else in the world.
- A major consequence of the Industrial Revolution is deforestation; this can have some dire consequences. Trees are very important because they act as the earth's lungs through the process of photosynthesis. They take in our exhaust (carbon dioxide) and use it to make food and oxygen. Furthermore, they act as sponges, slowing down runoff and holding water. When trees are removed, there are often severe floods during the rainy season. Trees are also the main home for the diversity of life on this planet. As more and more trees are uprooted, our climate becomes hotter and drier--like a desert.
- Paper or Plastic? How many times have you been asked this question in the grocery store? Environmentalists have often debated over the correct answer, which turns out to be NEITHER! To help the environment, you should purchase reusable canvas bags, which will never have to take energy to be recycled or take up space in a landfill.

Two websites that have great listings of more of these facts:

<http://library.thinkquest.org/11353/text/facts.htm>

<http://library.thinkquest.org/11353/text/communityeco.htm>