



REDUCING CONTAMINATION/IMPROVING QUALITY

BUSTING RECYCLING MYTHS

More than 300 attendees joined as we asked recycling experts to address the top myths that plague recycling and degrade confidence and quality. The response was so positive, we held a follow up webinar for a deeper dive.

This ebook is the official curated collection of insights shared in those webinars with downloadable messages that you can put straight to work addressing the myths in your community.

CONTAMINATION IS THE INTERSECTION OF QUALITY AND VALUE.



To fight contamination, we need to start first with the vitality of the program. The community needs to trust the effort is worth their time. Disbanding any confusion about the value of recycling is important to getting the community engaged. Once you have participation, you can then tackle contamination.

KEEFE HARRISON
Recycling Partnership

DEFINING QUALITY

The value of recyclables sold in bales is determined in large part by the quality of the materials.

Quality relates to **TWO** factors

- 1** Did the right the things go into the cart?
- 2** Were those things prepared properly so they don't damage other materials in a comingled stream?

KAREN BANDHAUER
Recycling Partnership

HOW CLEAN IS CLEAN? ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Do you need to wash containers before recycling?

Keep instructions simple.

CLEAN AND DRY.

JASON HALE

Senior Consultant, RRS

Optical scanners may not recognize plastics with food or liquid in them.

BENJAMIN PEDIGO

*Corporate Recycling Sales
Coordinator for Rumpke,
Cincinnati, Ohio*

In Philadelphia, we recommend that consumers

EMPTY AND RINSE.

Empty being the key word.

In areas with water shortages, WIPE rather than rinse.

PHIL BRESEE

*Recycling Director
for the City of Philadelphia*



METAL IS METAL?

If cans can go in, so can pans, right?

TIP: ASK YOUR MRF TO SHARE SOME PHOTOS FOR YOUR OUTREACH



SEEING IS BELIEVING

Videos or images that show inner workings of a MRF help people understand.

PHIL BRESEE
*Recycling Director
for the City of Philadelphia*

NOT IN A MRF.

BULKY METALS, CHAINS, AND LONG, STRINGY ITEMS CAN BE DANGEROUS AND COSTLY.

Make sure you're having a conversation with your MRF to identify your top YESs and NOs.

KEEFE HARRISON
Recycling Partnership

Drive routes, check in carts for quality issues.

LEAVE AN OOPS CARD.

JASON HALE
Senior Consultant, RRS

[DOWNLOAD AN OOPS CARD TEMPLATE.](#)



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BUSTING RECYCLING MYTHS

BUST THIS MYTH FOR YOUR COMMUNITY: [DOWNLOAD SHAREABLE IMAGES](#)
[AND LINK THEM TO YOUR MESSAGING.](#)

THANKS FOR RECYCLING

**Steel Cans and
Aluminum
Beverage Cans**

are

100%

recyclable.



Empty and recycle.



1000%
YES

Do you know what is currently
recyclable in your program?



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THANKS FOR RECYCLING

**Bulky metals
aren't often
recyclable at
the curb.**



Bulky metals (pots & pans), chains, and long, stringy items can be dangerous in processing machines, but can often be handled separately.



**Do you know what is currently
recyclable in your program?**



GLASS IS GLASS?

If jars can go in, why can't drinking glasses & window panes?

Don't give up on glass. It's a very important component in curbside dropoff recycling.

BENJAMIN PEDIGO
*Corporate Recycling Sales
Coordinator for Rumpke,
Cincinnati, Ohio*

**GLASS IS RECYCLABLE, BUT NOT ALL PROGRAMS ACCEPT GLASS.
SOME PROGRAMS ONLY TAKE GLASS AT DROPOFF LOCATIONS.**

**GLASS REPRESENTS
SIGNIFICANT LANDFILL
DIVERSION.**

BENJAMIN PEDIGO
*Corporate Recycling Sales
Coordinator for Rumpke,
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Not all glass is the same. Window glass and automotive glass are very different from glass bottles and jars.

MIKE POPE
*Director of Procurement for
Sonoco Recycling, Hartsville, SC*

**PROGRAM SUCCESS
DEPENDS ON THE
SUCCESS OF YOUR MRF.**

Check with your MRF to determine best language and top NO's



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**DOWNLOAD
MRF SURVEY
STARTER**

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THANKS FOR RECYCLING

Glass Is Recyclable! Empty, Rinse, Recycle.

Jars and bottles for sure.
Window glass and
automotive glass are
very different.



Do you know what is currently
recyclable in your program?



PLASTIC IS PLASTIC?

If it's plastic and has the little arrows on it, put it in the bin, right?

ALTHOUGH MOST BOTTLES AND CONTAINERS ARE GOOD TO GO, FILM AND PLASTIC BAGS MAY NOT BE.

There have been many changes and there is such a variety, **communicating plastics is an ongoing conversation.**

PHIL BRESEE
*Recycling Director
for the City of Philadelphia*

To best communicate which plastics are accepted:

- Talk to the MRF
- Keep messages short
- Caps are usually accepted when left on containers.

JASON HALE
Senior Consultant, RRS

WE ENCOURAGE PROGRAMS TO EXPLORE IF THEY CAN EXPAND BEYOND PLASTIC BOTTLES.

KEEFE HARRISON
Recycling Partnership

OUR MRFS HAVE TO STOP 2 OR 3 TIMES A DAY TO REMOVE FILM.

SUSAN ROBINSON
Waste Management

FILM CAN BE A MAJOR HEADACHE IN THE MRF.

Your MRF may not be the place for film, if not, partner programs exist.

PROBLEMS OR OPPORTUNITIES?

Give your community an answer. Film may warrant a targeted campaign.

BUSTING RECYCLING MYTHS

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[AND LINK THEM TO YOUR MESSAGING.](#)

THANKS FOR RECYCLING

Plastic Bags and Wrap Are Not Recyclable at the Curb.



Bags can stop a processing facility for an entire day.

*Find drop-off location:
plasticfilmrecycling.org*



photo courtesy Waste Connections

**Do you know what is currently
recyclable in your program?**



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THANKS FOR RECYCLING



Plastic bottles?
Empty,
Replace Caps,
and Recycle.



Do you know what is currently
recyclable in your program?



ARE CARTONS RECYCLABLE?

They all have layers of different types of materials.

YES! CARTONS ARE RECYCLABLE.

We are increasingly seeing cartons move into curbside recycling programs.

KAREN BANDHAUER
Recycling Partnership

A number of domestic and international mills pursue cartons for their long paper fibers – the majority of the packaging – and some markets are geared to recycle the aluminum and poly layers, as well.

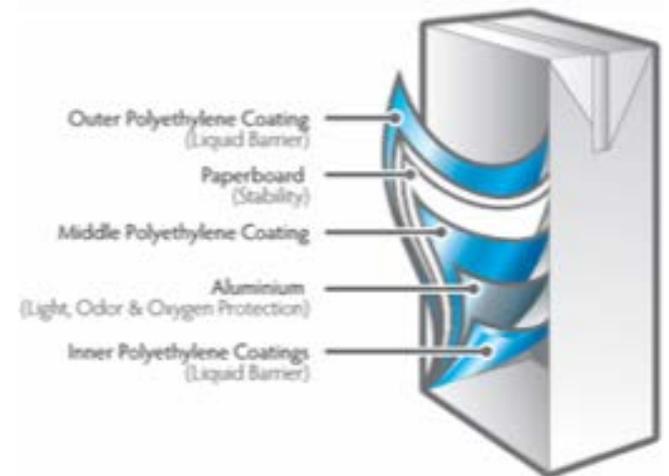


Image courtesy Carton Council

Check out more myths and truths about cartons:

[Click to read more.](#)

CARTON COUNCIL CAN HELP

More than 50% of the country has access to carton recycling. Whether you are adding cartons or promoting your accepted materials, Carton Council can help.

Visit recyclecartons.com

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[AND LINK THEM TO YOUR MESSAGING.](#)**

THANKS FOR RECYCLING

Cartons Are Recyclable!



Cartons are made
from high quality paper.



**Do you know what is currently
recyclable in your program?**



ARE PIZZA BOXES RECYCLABLE?

YES! PIZZA BOXES ARE RECYCLABLE!

EMPTY AND RECYCLE.

KEEFE HARRISON
Recycling Partnership

At the end of the day - the box is recyclable. We don't want the cheese, food, liner.

MIKE POPE
Director of Procurement for Sonoco Recycling, Hartsville, SC

I'm not aware of grease in pizza boxes being a major contaminate. The food will be a problem.

BENJAMIN PEDIGO
Corporate Recycling Sales Coordinator for Rumpke, Cincinnati, Ohio

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THANKS FOR RECYCLING

**Pizza Boxes
Are Recyclable!**

Empty and recycle.



Left over bits of pizza and cheese, coated paper and the little plastic tents, are not.

**Do you know what is currently
recyclable in your program?**



MRFs CAN SORT ANYTHING?

If it isn't recycled at the MRF, it just goes to the landfill, so no big deal, right?

A MRF MIGHT PROCESS 700 TONS A DAY - ANY TYPE OF CONTAMINATION CAN SHUT A MRF DOWN.

BENJAMIN PEDIGO
*Corporate Recycling Sales
Coordinator for Rumpke,
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Random curbside audits are helpful in managing expectations upfront.

MIKE POPE
*Director of Procurement for
Sonoco Recycling, Hartsville, SC*

Bulky items - Christmas trees, Christmas lights - drastically reduce the efficiency of a MRF.

BENJAMIN PEDIGO
*Corporate Recycling Sales
Coordinator for Rumpke,
Cincinnati, Ohio*

BUT, WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS?

Make instructions easy to access and understand with most common questions prioritized.

NOT TRUE! MRFs ARE THERE TO SEPARATE RECYCLABLE MATERIALS.



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THANKS FOR RECYCLING

Only Recycle Accepted Materials



Putting unaccepted materials
into your recycling bin can
be dangerous for workers.



photo courtesy Waste Connections

Do you know what is currently
recyclable in your program?



DOES IT TAKE MORE ENERGY TO RECYCLE THAN MAKE THINGS FROM NEW RESOURCES?

NOT TRUE.

There are actually significant energy savings in recycling versus manufacturing items from virgin materials.

JASON HALE
Senior Consultant, RRS

The environmental message has not proven to work as a motivator for a non-recyclers. To reach more “sometimes recyclers,” tie the benefits message to economics and domestic manufacturing jobs.

KAREN BANDHAUER
Recycling Partnership

SIMPLIFY INFORMATION. SPECIFICS ON ENERGY SAVINGS CAN BE A SCIENCE LESSON. OFFER A SIMPLE AND POSITIVE MESSAGE:

“**AVOID UNNECESSARY WASTE**”

If you need to offer more complex info, share it in places where readers have time to absorb it.

JASON HALE
Senior Consultant, RRS

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THANKS FOR RECYCLING

RECYCLING SAVES RESOURCES

There are significant energy savings in recycling versus manufacturing items from virgin materials.



Do you know what is currently recyclable in your program?



QUALITY IN | QUALITY OUT AND SO ON. AND SO ON.

KEEP IT SIMPLE AND POSITIVE.

Make sure your messages align across channels—handouts, website, customer service, etc.

ELIZABETH SCHUSSLER

Director of Communications, Recycling Partnership

4 OUT OF 4 EXPERTS AGREE:

Ask your MRF.

PHIL BRESSEE

City of Philadelphia

Ask your MRF.

BEN PEDIGO

Rumpke

Ask your MRF.

MIKE POPE

Sonoco

Ask your MRF.

JASON HALE

RRS



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DOWNLOAD STARTER SURVEY

<http://recyclecurbsid.staging.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/SAMPLE-SURVEY-QUESTIONS-FOR-YOUR-MRF.docx>