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Recycling Tidbits

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Dunn County Fair

I had a wonderful time at the Dunn County Fair a few weeks back. It was a little warm, but none-the-less exciting with many activities for all. Many residents stopped by our

booth with some great recycling questions. I thought it'd be appropriate to share some in this month's edition of *Recycling Tidbits*, enjoy!



By placing a recycling bin directly next to a garbage can you'll reduce the amount of trash in the recycling and recyclables in the trash!

Can I recycle the plastic around cases of water bottles?

Yes! Plastic wrap or the plastic film around cases of water or other bulk items are very recyclable. Also, don't forget about the plastic wrap around napkins, paper towels and toilet paper. Newspaper, bread, and dry cleaning

bags can all be recycled too! These items need to be recycled at a drop-off location; any Area Collection Station, the Transfer and Recycling Center or any grocery store in Menomonie or Eau Claire. If you are unable to spot a



bin ask an attendant or service desk employee to point you in the right direction.

Stump the Grump

True or False?

Greasy pizza boxes can be recycle.

Answer on page 3.



How do you tell what type of plastic something is?

This is easy – flip the container upside down or on its side and look for the chasing arrows symbol (recycling sign). Inside will be a number, 1-7. If it's a number one or two and its bottled shaped we can recycle it. If it has more



than one number, not a one or two, or not a bottle or jug it needs to be tossed into the trash. Remember

to "check for a neck." If the container doesn't have a neck like a pop or water bottle, chances are it's not recyclable in Dunn County. The few exceptions would be peanut butter containers, mayo and jelly jars, and plastic coffee cans.

Is it true we can't recycle yogurt containers?



Yes. Here in Dunn County we only accept number one and two plastic bottles and jugs. These containers have the highest resale value and are the easiest materials to recycle and process at a recycling facility. This is due partially to their uniform shape, streamlining of modern technology, and the fact that these materials have been recycled for a longer period of time; therefore, equipment used for processing is more efficient and widely available.

Other plastic containers may still be recycled elsewhere but they need to

be collected and sold in large volumes to be competitive in the market. Since Dunn County has a small population, we cannot collect enough to be competitive. Due to space, stockpiling material isn't an option for our small Transfer Station either. We don't have room inside to hold a large quantity of material until we can sell. Plastics degrade when set out in the elements and lose value quickly so that isn't an option either.

However, yogurt containers can be recycled if brought to the Me-

nomonie Market Food Co-op who has a partnership with Preserve's Gimme 5 recycling program. This program collects number 5 yogurt and other number 5 rigid containers. The company makes specialty items like toothbrushes and plates.

Preserve's recycled plastic uses at least 75% less oil than virgin polypropylene (number 5 plastic).



Is it true that other communities can mix recyclables in one recycling bin? Why can't we do that in Dunn County?

Yes, it is true that other communities can put all their recyclables into one container, it's called single sort, single stream or mixed recycling. The reason they can do this is generally due to a larger population or distance to a Materials Recovery Facility or MRF for short. MRFs use highly advanced and specialized sorting



Everything must come in pre-sorted as sorting equipment won't fit in our facility.

equipment to separate the different types of materials. Here in Dunn County, a lack of markets, specialized sorting equipment (which is very expensive to purchase and maintain) and

a small work force inhibit our ability to collect everything mixed together. Furthermore, contaminants must still be removed before the recyclables are sorted by machine. Sorting equipment would require more than the two or three employees that currently handle the work load at the Dunn County Transfer Station and Recycling Center. Also, there is a lack of equipment that would fit our Transfer Station and the needs of our community. It's like buying a SUV when a Volkswagen Beetle is all that will fit in the garage. Our 'garage' just isn't big enough. That's not to say Dunn County hasn't looked into upgrading our Transfer Station. The Solid Waste Director looks into this issue every 2 years. Like everything else, it's an investment and currently that investment wouldn't pay off.



Conveyor belts move recyclables around at a large MRF. Workers are in place to catch containments or non-recyclables such as hoses, umbrellas, plates, and more.

Generally cardboard and paper are the first items to be removed. Next, magnets remove steel, eddy currents repel aluminum cans off the line, optical sorters send out puffs of air to get plastic containers and then glass is left for last.

Workers are placed strategically around the sorting line to pull off items missed by machines or materials that need to be sorted by hand such as cartons.

Picture courtesy of Accelerated Waste Solutions.

Pop boxes can't be recycled?! Why not?



As a general rule of thumb; if a cardboard box is made specifically for the fridge, freezer or bathroom it's not recyclable. For example, if pop cans

were packaged in normal, recyclable cardboard, guess what would happen when the cans sweat or the box got wet? Kerplunk! The cans would come crashing through the bottom of the box. How about if a shipment of bar soap got rained on? The pavement below would quickly become very clean. Regular cardboard breaks down when wet, which is how recyclers at paper mills create a slur-

ry to break down and recycle cardboard. For this reason, cardboard boxes for frozen, refrigerated, or bathroom items are either coated or treated with a chemical that prevents it from breaking down when wet – precisely what recyclers need it to do. For this reason, frozen, refrigerated and bathroom boxes are contaminants to paper buyers and are not accepted for recycling.

Do I need to cut down cardboard boxes?

Yes. Cardboard boxes should be flattened and cut down to pieces no larger than three square feet.

Flattening and cutting down boxes will ensure they'll fit into a recycling

truck and one of the recycling roll-offs at an Area Collection Station or the Transfer and Recycling Center.



Thank you!!

A heartfelt thank you to Boy Scout Troop 47 who emptied recycling bins during the fair. We couldn't have done it without their help! Also, it was a hot, hot Sunday afternoon so thank you to all volunteers who made the clean-up process go much quicker. Your kindness is much appreciated; Sustainable Dunn member Monika Herrmann, Menomonie Lion Arnie Thompson, County Board Supervisors Chuck Maves, Don Kuether and Cal Christianson and my wonderful husband Ryan Haffele.



The amazing clean-up crew! Pictured left to right: Don Kuether, Mee Yang, Chuck Maves, Amanda Haffele and Arnie Thompson. Not pictured: Ryan Haffele, Cal Christianson and Monika Herrmann.

Stump the Grump



False! Greasy pizza boxes cannot be recycled. The grease interferes

with water's ability to break down the cardboard to create a slurry. Therefore, the next time you

order a pizza, toss the greasy portion in the trash and recycle the non-greasy portion.