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Recycling Tidbits

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Stump the Grump

Why was the #7 or 'other' category invented and placed on plastic made items?



Recycling Symbol

The chasing arrows or recycling symbol was invented in 1970 by Gary Anderson, a 23-year old college student who won a design contest sponsored by the Container Corporation of America. The company asked contestants to come up with a symbol that would represent the paper recycling process. Gary's design won and he was awarded around \$2,000 for what he said was "a day or two of work."



Gary Andersen on right.

The original theory or idea behind this new symbol was so consumers would know how much, if any, recycled content was in paper products. The paper industry took the original design and created two additional symbols. However, the industry wasn't able to get a patent on the original symbol and therefore it became public domain. The popularity of the design spread quickly and became a national symbol to represent recycling.

In 1988 the Society of the Plastics Industry created the Resin Identification Code. This code was invented to aid manufacturers in identifying what type of polymer or plastic was used

in the manufacturing process. The code incorporates Gary's design by placing a number (1 - 7) in the middle of the arrows. You can find the resin identification code on plastic containers, packaging, toys, etc. You may recognize this code on the bottom of soda bottles (#1 plastic) or detergent bottles (#2 plastic).



Years later municipalities, recycling companies, and Dunn County Solid Waste used this code to inform residents on what type of plastic could be collected and recycled (#1 and #2 bottles and jugs). With the invention of new products, shapes, and additives, this identification code no longer tells the whole truth. A container may start out as a #1 plastic but additives or the type of mold used changes the composition slightly and therefore renders it a hybrid. This hybrid no longer has the same melting point or density of its purebred cousin, therefore making it a contaminant in the recycling stream. For example, berry containers and water bottles are both stamped as #1 plastics. These containers are molded differently which causes the berry container to undergo a slight transformation to become a hybrid. This hybrid cannot be recycled with water bottles because it is no longer a pure #1 plastic.

If you look on the Society of the Plastics Industry's website you will see that there are 34 different types of resins or plastics being used today. However the industry only identifies 6 resin types on products, 1 - 6. The number 7 is the 'other' category to help identify the remaining resins.

The chasing arrows or recycling symbol has brought an awareness to our society about recycling. On the other hand it has also created a misconception within our society that because an item has a recycling symbol means that it has to be recycled. However, not all items are created equal. With different ingredients, drying times, processing equipment, and available markets not everything can be recycled. Contamination is an increasing problem in material recovery facilities, a facility that processes recyclables to sell to a manufacture for recycling. This is due to the general conscientious among US citizens that when in doubt recycle. I, and a few other recycling specialists, would like to convince you that if you're unsure if any item can get recycled, error on the side of caution and throw it out or call your local recycling/waste representative and ask. We love talking about recycling, so please ask.



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What do you think?

Recycling is symbolized many different ways; a few examples for your viewing pleasure are down below and to the right. Some groups believe that in order to represent a clear message about recycling, the recycle symbol should be uniform, like a stop sign or school zone sign.

What do you think? Do you think our society should make recycling symbols uniform? Are there too many variations? Do the variations confuse you?

Personally I think there are other things that are more important, like getting people to recycle away from home, at sporting events, at the park, in their bathroom or at work.

Recycling is important, it's the law, and it provides more jobs than a landfill ever will. As long as people are recycling correctly I say keep the creative symbols coming!

Happy Recycling!



Baby Monsters

A great reuse idea for the seal on juice or milk cartons. Check out the blog Michele Made Me for more crafts and ideas; www.michelemademe.com



Repurposed Tires

Tires cannot legally be thrown into the trash or burned; they must be recycled. Tires are accepted for recycling at any Area Collection Station or the Transfer and Recycling Center for a fee. If you don't live in Dunn County contact a tire or auto body shop to see if they'll take them. If you're feeling creative try one of the reuse ideas below.



Rochelle from Studio 'g' has some creative ideas for the garden including a step by step guide for the recycled tire planter shown above.

<http://www.studioblog.com/kitchen/diy-recycled-tire-garden-planters/>

Barefoot in Paradise has a great step by step guide on how to make the tire rocker shown below.

<http://barefootparadise.blogspot.com/search/label/tires>



Bury semi or tractor tires for puppy play time!



Tires are great for photo opportunities!



Creative Planters



Stump the Grump



The coding system includes a seventh code, identified as "other." Use of this code indicates that the product in question is made with a resin other than one through six. The "other" code was developed to address legislative demands in

some states that all consumer packages fitting certain size and functional parameters feature a resin identification code.