

EUREKA! RECYCLING

Eureka Recycling is a nonprofit organization that specializes in recycling and waste reduction and manages Saint Paul's recycling program. We believe that waste is preventable, not inevitable. Our mission is to provide innovative programs, services, education and advocacy to demonstrate that our resources are valuable. Our goal is to offer you opportunities to conserve resources today so that together we can reach a waste-free tomorrow.

Finding a Better Way To Deal With Plastic

Why are you collecting plastic bottles now?

In the past, Eureka Recycling (formerly the recycling department of the Saint Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium) opted not to collect plastic because it was impossible to affordably collect plastic in the old trucks and the markets for the materials were poor and volatile. This would have created a lot of financial risk for the community's recycling program. Instead, we added other materials to the program like clothes and linens, which allowed us to recycle more per dollar.



But now, plastic is everywhere and there are better markets for plastic than ever before, specifically for #1 and #2 plastic bottles. At the same time, the amount of trash we produce, including plastic bottles, is increasing. When the options to dispose of the growing amount of plastic are incinerating it or burying it in a landfill—both of which release harmful chemicals into our air and water—trying our best to recycle as much plastic as we can has become the best alternative. That doesn't mean that recycling plastic is easy. To request our fact sheet about the limitations and complications of plastic recycling, call our hotline or visit our website.

What happens to my plastic bottles?

In Saint Paul we do everything possible to make sure the plastic we collect is recycled into new products, which is why we only collect #1 and #2 bottles. But that doesn't change the fact that plastic bottles, unlike glass, metal and paper, cannot be recycled over and over again. Most bottles and jugs are used to make products that cannot be recycled like toys, combs and novelties. They don't become food and beverage containers again even though the FDA has approved recycled plastic for this use. Why? Companies like Coke and Pepsi continue to use virgin materials (petroleum) to make their bottles because it is often cheaper than recycled plastic due to the fact that it is subsidized. We continue to be concerned about the sustainability of using a non-renewable resource to make single-use plastic packaging. If you are also concerned about this and would like to join a national effort to urge companies to use recycled plastic in their bottles, call our hotline at (651) 222-SORT (7678). We will keep you notified of ways you can be involved.



Reducing and rejecting plastic products

In addition to recycling the #1 and #2 plastic bottles you have, we urge you, and other Saint Paul residents, to reduce the amount of plastic you use and buy whenever possible since much of it cannot be recycled. This is especially true for plastics marked with #3 through #7. Almost all plastic products are imprinted with a resin code—a small number enclosed by the “chasing arrows” symbol. The code is misleading, since it is meant to indicate the type of plastic resin used to make the bottle, not its recyclability. Technically all plastics can be recycled, but only #1 and #2 bottles (which are the most widespread kinds of plastics) have the infrastructure, supply and market conditions to make recycling feasible.

Plastics marked with #3 are Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC). Many common health and beauty products like lotions, soaps, bug repellants, shampoos, and some food products like oils and maple syrups, are packaged in PVC, including brands you would find at your local grocer or natural foods store. PVC is highly toxic throughout its life. PVC production has been found to expose workers and surrounding communities to high levels of vinyl chloride, which is proven to cause cancer. PVC packaging has been found to leach toxins and carcinogens into the contents of their bottle, and eventually into the user, especially when food or beverages are heated in the plastic. At the end of its life, burning PVC in incinerators releases toxic acid gases into the environment, while burying it in landfills releases toxins into the groundwater.



An effort is underway to discourage the manufacture, sale and purchase of PVC bottles in communities throughout the nation. And you can help! First, become an informed consumer and avoid buying PVC. PVC bottles look just like #1 bottles, so look for the #3 on the bottom. Be careful! Sometimes the same product is packaged in #3 PVC for one size bottle, and #1 plastic for another size bottle. Call our hotline for a list of products that are packaged in PVC. Contact the manufactures of your favorite products using the toll free number printed on the bottle and demand they switch from using PVC. Talk to local government officials so that they can adopt resolution that pressure companies

to use non-PVC packaging. Ask your local retailer to work with product manufacturers to discontinue the use of PVC. Call our hotline at (651) 222-7678 and we will add you to our growing list of people who want to be informed about PVC and organized opportunities to take action, like signing petitions or participating in campaigns to call manufacturers.

Eureka Recycling is committed to working on all of these solutions—recycling, reusing, reducing and rejecting plastic products—in order to reach a waste-free tomorrow. We thank you for joining us.

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RECYCLING

Recycling Hotline
(651) 222-SORT (7678)

www.eurekarecycling.org

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