



Preserving Resources,
Preventing Waste

The New Jersey WasteWise Bulletin

Newsletter of the New Jersey WasteWise Business Network – Spring 2023
*WasteWise ... improving your bottom line and the environment
through waste reduction, recycling, and recycled product procurement.*

Chemical Recycling of Plastics Heats Up

The term “chemical recycling” has been in the news more and more lately and is being touted by advocates as a solution to the plastic waste problem. Those opposed to chemical recycling, however, assert that this process does not qualify as recycling, could disrupt viable traditional plastic container recycling markets and is fraught with health and environmental risks.

So, what exactly is chemical recycling? While there are a number of technologies that are characterized as chemical recycling, this process typically entails breaking down plastics to their chemical compounds via a pyrolysis system, with the end product being a fuel. Pyrolysis - the thermal decomposition of materials at elevated temperatures in an inert atmosphere – results in a change of chemical composition.

There is some support at the federal and state level for chemical recycling of plastics as concerns about the proliferation of plastics in the environment - especially microplastics in the oceans - and the lack of recycling markets for certain plastics continue to grow. Numerous states have already passed legislation that promotes chemical recycling of plastics.

New Jersey’s Recycling Market Development Council, which was formed in 2021 and issued a report of its findings in 2022, concluded that chemical recycling should not be considered a recycling activity since plastics that are chemically recycled are consumed as fuel and not used to make new products. The Council did, however, state that it would reconsider its position should future developments in this field warrant such a review.

In-Field Degradation Test for Compostable Packaging Launched

The Composting Consortium, a collaboration of industry partners managed by Closed Loop Partners, has launched a study on the degradation of more than 30 types of certified compostable products, which will be introduced into various commercial composting operations. Compostable cutlery, molded fiber bowls, bioplastic cups, snack packaging and more will be examined in the study. Data gathered from this assessment will enable industrial composting operations to better handle the growing waste stream of compostable products.

LEED Zero Green Buildings Flourish

Companies and organizations looking to take the next step in sustainability by lessening the impact of their buildings on the environment should consider the LEED Zero program. This initiative, a compliment to the LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building certification program, verifies the achievement of net zero goals in existing buildings. The LEED Zero program includes four components – carbon emissions, energy, water, and waste. The waste component is run in conjunction with the TRUE zero waste certification program. Visit <https://www.usgbc.org/resources/leed-zero-program-guide> to learn more.

Recycling Fact of the Day

The recycling sector supplies 40 percent (on average across all commodities) of raw material needs for U.S. manufacturing.

Did You Know...

- thredUP is an online consignment and thrift store that was created to keep used clothing out of landfills and to reduce the cost of fashion. The company reports that its sustainable reuse approach to fashion has resulted in 637 million pounds of CO₂e being avoided since starting up in 2009. Visit <https://www.thredup.com/about>.
- Philadelphia is now collecting and composting food waste generated by 50 of the city's recreation centers. Eventually, all 156 of the centers will be part of the program. Compost generated by the program is provided free to the city's registered community gardens.
- The Refill Market, based in Haddon Township, aims to reduce demand for single-use plastics by offering a variety of household detergents and personal care products in bulk so customers can fill their own containers. Visit <https://www.therefillmarketnj.com/> for additional information.
- NewspaperWood is a wood veneer product made in the Netherlands from recycled newspaper. This product is .6 mm thick and shows a grain structure created by countless layers of processed newspaper. For more information, visit <https://newspaperwood.com/>.
- In 2020, 39 percent of the municipal solid waste generated in New Jersey was recycled, while 55 percent of the total solid waste stream was recycled.
- Wegmans, which operates 110 stores in eight states and Washington, D.C., adopted a company-wide ban on single-use plastic bags and met this commitment by the fall of 2022.
- Paper recovered for recycling in the U.S. in 2021 would fill more than 4,000 Washington Monuments.
- More than 4 billion pounds of carpet enter the solid waste stream in the United States every year.
- Almost all ink and toner cartridges can be recycled and reused, allowing business to prevent waste and save money.
- The recycling symbol was created, and the first Earth Day was held in 1970.

New Jersey WasteWise Business Network Going Strong for Two Decades

The New Jersey WasteWise Business Network has been providing information, resources, educational events, and networking opportunities to Garden State companies and organizations for 20 years! Formed in 2003, the DEP's **free** educational program on waste reduction, recycling, recycled product procurement and sustainability has grown considerably since being launched and has become an integral part of New Jersey's recycling community. There are now 355 businesses and organizations registered as members of the New Jersey WasteWise Business Network and more than 500 representatives from these businesses and organizations participating in the program. Learn more at <https://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/wastewise/brbn03.htm>.

Reducing Recycling Contamination a Key

While the cyclical nature of recycling markets is a given, one way to mitigate this volatility is to provide contaminant-free recyclable materials to the marketplace. Thus, continual education about the need to clean up our recycling stream remains essential. There are many great resources available on this topic, including the DEP's Recycle Right NJ social media campaign graphics. Check out these free resources, as well as environmental infographics, promotional ads, radio public service announcements, articles and more at <https://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/promotools.html>.



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<http://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/wastewise/brbn03.htm>