

## Frequently Asked Questions

### The Top 9 Things You Should Know About Recycling in Cuyahoga County

#### Q1. Why is recycling important?

When you recycle, your used items get a new life. Some materials can travel through the recycling process and be back on store shelves in as little as 30 days! Your aluminum cans, cartons, paper, plastic water bottles and cereal boxes can become many different things.

Additionally, recycling conserves land and natural resources. When you recycle, you keep materials out of landfills where they do not decompose. Instead, you are sending them to a recycling facility to be turned into something useful. Products made with recyclable material use fewer natural resources and energy, making recycling a sustainable activity that also supports local jobs. Recycling is good for the earth and the people who live here now and in the future!

#### Q2. Why were the rules for recycling in Cuyahoga County changed/updated?

The Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District has launched a countywide education program because people are often confused about what can and cannot be recycled. The rules for recycling have been updated to make them easier to understand. Simply put, the items that you should recycle – no matter where you live in Cuyahoga County -- include cans, cartons, glass, paper and boxes along with plastic bottles and containers. These items should be emptied and rinsed with the caps put back on and then placed loose, not bagged, into your recycling container. If you recycle these items in your home, you can reduce your trash by half.

Part of the campaign helps residents understand which plastics can be recycled since not all plastics are recyclable. We no longer refer to the number on the container, because not all numbered items can be recycled. Now we talk about the shape of the container. Anything with a top, a cap or a lid can be recycled.

Other plastics like Styrofoam™, plastic cups and the new clamshell containers for lettuce and berry containers cannot be recycled. Please see Q9 below for more information about plastics including a chart showing which plastics can and cannot be recycled.

Helping Cuyahoga County residents understand what things should be recycled curbside versus what should be recycled through another method is the main message of the District's Recycle More, Recycle Better campaign. Always refer to [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org) for the most updated information.

#### Q3. What happens to my recyclables once they are picked up?

Whether your recycling is picked up by your city or a private company, recyclables from Cuyahoga County go to one of three Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in the area. Each MRF is owned and operated by a private company (Kimble Co. in Twinsburg, Republic Services in Oberlin and Waste Management in Akron). Each MRF accepts, sorts and processes tons of recyclables every day. All of these facilities accept metal cans, cartons, glass bottles and jars, mixed paper and cardboard, along with plastic bottles and containers.

A MRF is a large sortation facility with many conveyor belts and machinery. Here, recycling trucks are weighed before tipping their loads on the building floor. Mixed recyclables are then scooped up by a front-end loader and placed on the sorting line. Large objects and contamination are removed first. The recyclables then travel through an automated sorting system which uses a disk screen, magnets, optical sorters and workers on the line to separate the materials.





The sorted materials are baled and sold to manufacturers who make them into a variety of new products. For instance, your cereal boxes may become a game board or paper towels. Your aluminum cans may become new soda cans or airplane parts. Glass bottles may become kitchen tiles and your soup cans may become new bikes or even a bridge. The cycle is endless.

#### **Q4. What if residents put the wrong things in their recycling? What happens then?**

If you put items in your recycling that are not accepted for recycling at the MRF, these items could jam or slow the sortation process and may even endanger workers. Some examples include clothing, plastic film, hoses and cords that tangle in the equipment; large metal objects that damage equipment; and syringes that can harm workers.

Contaminants are costly to the MRF. Eventually, this cost could be passed on to your community because the contaminants must be sorted out and landfilled. That is why it is important to recycle properly. Many items that cannot be recycled at the MRF may be recyclable elsewhere. Visit [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org) to learn more.

#### **Q5. If a resident moves to a different city outside of Cuyahoga County, will the rules for recycling change again?**

The District has developed a common list of recyclables that apply to every community in Cuyahoga County. While collection methods may look a little different from community to community, the materials that should be recycled are the same and include cans, cartons, glass, paper and cardboard along with plastic bottles and containers.

Communities make their own rules when it comes to the type of recycling container that is used and their collection set-out rules, but the materials that should be included in curbside recycling are the same across Cuyahoga County and also apply to many of our neighboring counties. That is because we all use the same three Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) to process our collected recyclables.

For more information about recycling in Cuyahoga County visit [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org).

#### **Q6. What about recycling for other things that don't fall under the categories of cans, cartons, glass, paper and cardboard along with plastic bottles and containers?**

The District sponsors many special collections for what we call "Other Recycling," including household hazardous waste and electronics. Collections take place at the District headquarters as well as in [most communities](#) either year-round or on designated dates. Additionally, many charitable organizations accept donations of clothing and furniture. Search your items on [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org) to learn best practices for recycling.

##### **Clothing/Household Goods**

DO NOT place in your curbside recycling. Donate usable items instead. Contact the District for a free a copy of Pass It On – A Resource-Full Guide to Donating Usable Stuff or search your item in "What Do I Do With?" on [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org).

##### **Computers/Electronics**

Recycle through your community's Computer Round-Up event or through a local electronics recycler and at some retail locations. Find your community on [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org)'s handy [Recycling in Your Community](#) page for details.

##### **Construction Materials/Concrete**

Waste from remodeling projects can be taken to a construction debris landfill or a recycler. For locations, search construction materials on [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org).



#### Plastic Bags/Film

Recycle at a grocery or retail store that offers a plastic bag collection bin. DO NOT put plastic bags and film in your curbside recycling. The bags tangle up in the recycling equipment at the Material Recovery Facility.

#### Scrap Metal

Appliances and other metal objects can be recycled through your community's bulky waste collection or local scrap metal recycler. Search scrap metal on [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org).

#### Shredded Paper

DO NOT place in your curbside recycling but recycle in a Paper Retriever® or River Valley Paper drop-off bin. The green and yellow bins are located in the parking lots of some schools, churches and retail stores.

#### Tires

When you buy new tires, recycle your old ones at the time of purchase and pay the small fee. Businesses with tires to dispose should contact the District for State rules on tire transportation and disposal.

#### **Q7. What about things that can't be recycled curbside or elsewhere?**

Many items simply need proper disposal. Here are the most searched categories at [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org):

#### Household Hazardous Waste

Recycle through your community's Household Hazardous Waste program. Items collected include oil-based paints, lawn and garden chemicals and automotive fluids. Find your community on [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org)'s handy [Recycling in Your Community](#) tool for details.

#### Medication

Do not flush or put down a drain. Unused or expired prescription medications can be safely disposed at police stations that offer a RX drop-box. Participating police stations can be searched on [RXdrugdropbox.com](http://RXdrugdropbox.com).

#### Needles/Sharps

NEVER place in your curbside recycling. Needles and sharps from home injections should be placed in a rigid plastic container such as a laundry detergent bottle then sealed securely and disposed with your trash.

#### Paint - Latex

Latex paint is not hazardous but should be dried out before disposing in your trash. Use cat litter, Oil-Dri or other absorbent product to harden the paint. Replace the lid and place in a trash bag before disposing.

#### Styrofoam™

Styrofoam™ cups and containers are not recyclable. Dispose in your trash. Foam peanuts and packing material can be reused or recycled at limited locations. Search Styrofoam™ on [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org) for a list.

#### Other

Find a comprehensive list of many different items in the "[What Do I Do With?](#)" search engine on [CuyahogaRecycles.org](http://CuyahogaRecycles.org)



**Q8. Why do plastics have numbers inside recycling symbols if they're not recyclable?**

The numbers on plastic containers are resin codes used by the plastics industry to identify the type of plastic used to make the container. Not all plastics with the 1-7 symbol are recyclable. See this chart for details:

WHAT ABOUT PLASTIC?	INCLUDE IN YOUR CURBSIDE RECYCLING?	
	YES	NO
Water Bottles with Caps On	X	
Beverage Bottles and Jugs (milk, juice, etc) with Caps On	X	
Plastic Tubs and Lids (yogurt, cottage cheese, etc.)	X	
Laundry, Shampoo and Soap Containers with Caps On	X	
Fruit and Lettuce Containers (thermoform trays)		X
Produce, Deli & Bakery Trays		X
Plastic Bags, Wraps, Film		X
Cups (Solo cups, coffee cups)		X
Utensils and Plates		X
Fast Food Containers and Cups (Styrofoam and molded plastic)		X
Bulky plastic (lawn chairs, crates, buckets, Little Tikes/Step 2 products)		X
Clothes hangers		X
Toys		X
Flower Pots		X
Straws		X
Styrofoam		X

**Q9. Where should I direct our residents to learn more about recycling in our community?**

Visit the District's handy resource [Recycling in Your Community](#) to learn about specific recycling programs and detailed instructions for your community.