

Myths About Recycling

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Don't buy into or promote myths about recycling. Check out these ideas for explaining the "how" and "why" of reducing our solid waste totals.

Adapted from the National Recycling Coalition, 2005.

www.nrc-recycle.org/default.htm

Myth 1: There are no markets for recyclables.

Rebuttal: Demand exists for all materials collected in curbside recycling programs. Industrial development in China has magnified the demand.

Myth 2: We are recycling as much as we can.

Rebuttal: We haven't come close to meeting waste reduction goals. Currently, 78% of glass containers, 60% of aluminum cans, 41% of steel cans, and 45% of paper/paperboard containers and packaging are not recycled.

Myth 3: Recycling causes more pollution than it prevents.

Rebuttal: Recycling resulted in a reduction in ten categories of air pollutants and eight categories of water pollutants. Using recycled materials in manufacturing requires significantly less energy than processing with raw materials. A 30% national recycling rate reduces greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to eliminating 25 million cars from the highways.

Myth 4: Recycling doesn't save trees or natural resources

Rebuttal: Recycling conserves timber, water, and minerals; helps preserve biodiversity; and reduces habitat destruction and soil erosion.

Myth 5: There's still plenty of landfill space, so why bother?

Rebuttal: The cities that generate the most waste are running out of space to store it. There are fewer landfills, but they are much larger. More waste is exported and moved around to distant landfills than ever before.

Myth 6: Landfills and incinerators are safe.

Rebuttal: Landfills can be a major source of groundwater pollution, methane emission, and toxic air pollution. Nearly 20% of Superfund sites are landfills.

Myth 7: If recycling makes sense, the free-market will make it happen.

Rebuttal: Some industries do voluntarily use recycled materials because it is advantageous to do so. If the government stopped subsidizing many industries that use new materials and landfills, recycling would compete more equitably.

Myth 8: Recycling is a burden.

Rebuttal: More people recycle than vote. When recycling is convenient and people understand its benefits, many choose to recycle.

> [March 2006 Table of Contents](#)