



Some things aren't allowed in your trash at all

Certain waste items should specifically be kept out of landfills because they can be harmful to human health or the environment. This includes many common household chemicals, as well as electronic waste.

Hazardous Household Chemicals

City of Chicago Household Chemical and Computer Recycling Center— <https://bit.ly/2RdgSDp>

1150 N. North Branch St. on Goose Island

The City of Chicago runs a permanent facility for the processing, recycling, and appropriately disposal of most residential hazardous waste. They accept both chemicals and e-waste during their open hours. Check out their website for a full list of items they do and do not accept.

Accepts: Most household chemicals; rechargeable and lithium batteries; oil-based paints; all aerosols; unused or expired medication (non-controlled only); residential e-waste including all items banned from Illinois landfills.

Does not accept: Industrial/commercial waste; explosives; medical waste or controlled substances; home appliances including air conditioners; most electronics not banned from state landfills; various other items

Free dropoff—bring items to 1150 N. North Branch Street, Chicago, IL

Limited hours—Tues 7:00 am - 12:00 pm, Thurs 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm, 1st Saturday of the month 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Common household hazardous waste:

Cleaning Products

- Oven cleaners
- Drain cleaners
- Wood and metal cleaners and polishes
- Toilet cleaners
- Tub, tile, shower cleaners
- Bleach (laundry)
- Pool chemicals

Automotive Products

- Motor oil
- Fuel additives
- Carburetor and fuel injection cleaners
- Air conditioning refrigerants
- Starter fluids
- Automotive batteries

Workshop/Painting Supplies

- Adhesives and glues
- Furniture strippers
- Oil or enamel based paint
- Stains and finishes
- Paint thinners and turpentine
- Paint strippers and removers
- Photographic chemicals

Lawn and Garden Products

- Herbicides
- Insecticides
- Fungicides/wood preservatives

Indoor Pesticides

- Ant sprays and baits
- Cockroach sprays and baits
- Flea repellents and shampoos
- Bug sprays
- Houseplant insecticides
- Moth repellents
- Mouse and rat poisons and baits

Miscellaneous

- Batteries
- Mercury thermostats or thermometers
- Fluorescent light bulbs
- Driveway sealer

Not as hazardous as you might think:

Batteries: Regular (non-rechargeable) alkaline batteries are safe to throw away in the regular trash, according to the EPA. Old alkaline batteries (made before 1996) contained mercury, but alkaline batteries made in the past several years don't contain hazardous chemicals. They also have very little recyclable content.

Latex paint: Latex paints have very low toxicity levels, and are expensive to process at hazardous waste collection facilities. The best option for leftover paint is to use it up or store it for later. Otherwise, small amounts of paint can be painted on scrap lumber or old cardboard to empty the can, while larger amounts can be mixed with kitty litter or sawdust, then thrown away in the regular trash. Dry, empty metal paint cans are recyclable!



Electronics Disposal and Recycling

Electronics are frequently manufactured using rare, toxic, or valuable materials including glass, plastic, and metals like lead, mercury, and chromium. Illinois is one of several states that ban the disposal of certain electronics in all landfills.

FreeGeek Chicago — www.freegeekchicago.org

3411 W. Diversey Ave., Chicago, IL, in the basement | 773.342.6205

FreeGeek is a nonprofit that refurbishes electronics, particularly computers. They use refurbished electronics to provide job skills training and low-cost computer equipment for economically disadvantaged individuals and non-profit organizations. They send nonworking/unsalvageable material for responsible recycling.

Accepts: Computers, cell phones, video game consoles, computer components including monitors, keyboards, printers, etc

Does not accept: TV's, DVD and VHS players, copy machines, household appliances

Free dropoff with suggested donation for some items, pickup available

Limited hours--Wed-Sun 11:00am - 5:00pm

Brookfield Zoo and Eco-Cell—www.eco-cell.org

Bins available at Brookfield Zoo's north and south entrances, 3300 Golf Rd, Brookfield, IL

EcoCell pays non-profit organizations, including Brookfield Zoo, for collecting donated/recycled cell phones which are then refurbished and sold or recycled for metals.

Accepts: Cell phones including smart phones, iPods, iPads, and tablets

Free dropoff

R4 Services — <https://www.r4services.com>

1301 West 35th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60609 | 773-843-3915 | service@r4services.com

R4 Services is an information management company with a robust e-waste recycling program, as well as paper shredding services. They will arrange to drop off bins to collect large quantities of e-waste and pick them up for safe disposal.

Accepts: Assorted electronics including all state-listed e-waste; call or email for specifics

Contact for information about pricing

Com2 Recycling — <https://www.com2recycling.com>

500 Kehoe Blvd Carol Stream IL 60188 | 630-653-2662 | info@com2computer.com

Com2 is an electronics recycling company that often works with communities to organize large-scale electronics collection events. Contact them to arrange specifics.

Accepts: Assorted electronics; nothing listed on <https://www.com2recycling.com/do-not-accept.php>

Contact for information about pricing

Other E-waste Dropoff Facilities—<http://epadata.epa.state.il.us/land/eWaste/collection-sites.asp>

The Illinois EPA maintains a list of approved locations that may collect electronic waste across the state. Many of these locations may not take all forms of e-waste, so call ahead to find out what they do and do not accept.

E-waste

Computer parts

- All computers (laptops, desktops, notebooks, tablets, etc)
- Monitors
- Keyboards
- Mice
- Printers
- Scanners
- Small-scale servers
- Computer cables
- Zip drives

Entertainment systems

- TVs
- DVD players
- DVD recorders
- VCRs
- Video game consoles
- Cable receivers
- Digital converter boxes
- Satellite receivers

Portable devices

- Cell phones, including smart phones
- MP3 players
- PDAs

Miscellaneous

- Fax machines



Some things are hard to recycle

Many waste items that cannot be recycled in Chicago blue carts can be recycled or refurbished for reuse through various services or organizations.

Recycling and disposal for unusual non-hazardous household items

Bikes

Working Bikes (www.workingbikes.org)

2434 S. Western Ave., Chicago, IL

Working Bikes collects and refurbishes unwanted bikes and bike parts. Restored bikes are donated to individuals and partner organizations in Chicago and in developing nations throughout Latin America and Africa.

Accepts: All bikes, bike parts, and accessories

Free dropoff at multiple dropoff locations (see website for locations)

Pickup available for very large donations by arrangement

Books

Paperback books can be recycled in standard blue-bin recycling. Hardcover books, including textbooks, cannot be recycled as-is, but the pages can be recycled as standard paper recycling if they are removed from the cover.

OpenBooks (www.open-books.org)

651 W. Lake St., Chicago, IL

OpenBooks accepts donations of old books in saleable condition. Books are donated to partner organizations, nonprofits, and schools, or sold to fund literacy programs for children and teens.

Accepts: Used books in good condition, LPs, CDs, and DVDs

Does not accept: Damaged books, encyclopedias and dictionaries, sets of law books, magazines/journals, VHS tapes, or pre-college textbooks

Free dropoff at multiple dropoff locations (see website for locations)

Pickup available by arrangement

Corks

ReCORK (<https://recork.org/>)

info@recork.org

ReCORK collects and recycles natural cork wine stoppers into consumer goods such as yoga blocks and shoe parts. The company is a project backed by an alliance of businesses and individuals hoping to promote sustainable business practices and create environmental change.

Accepts: Natural used corks (any shape or condition)

Does not accept: Synthetic stoppers

Free dropoff at multiple dropoff locations (see website for locations)

Will accept large quantities of cork as direct mail shipment (at least 15 lbs of cork)

Plastic bags and plastic film

Plastic bags and plastic film cannot be recycled in blue bins because they get caught in the gears of recycling sorting machines and cause breakdowns. Plastic bags and film can be dropped off for recycling at local grocery stores. Stores may have drop-off cans in the lobby, or may accept bags at the service desk.

Alternative Methods of Responsible Waste Disposal



Packing Materials

Many UPS stores will accept clean packing peanuts and bubble wrap for reuse. Starch-based packing peanuts are biodegradable and compostable.

Styrofoam

Dart Container Corporation (<https://www.dartcontainer.com/environment/ps-foam-recycling>)

As a major manufacturer of Styrofoam products, Dart Manufacturing runs an extensive foam pick-up and recycling program, particularly in the Midwest. They have several dropoff locations in the area where different kinds of Styrofoam can be taken for recycling.

Accepts: Clean Styrofoam including cups, food containers, egg cartons, meat packaging foam, protective packaging foam, and other foam marked #6

Does not accept: Packing peanuts

Free dropoff at multiple dropoff locations (see website for locations)

Miscellaneous resources

Terracycle (<http://www.terracycle.com>)

Recyclable materials can only be recycled as a commodity if there's a large enough quantity of them at hand to process and sell. Terracycle organizes large-scale recycling programs for typically hard-to-recycle waste streams nationwide. Find an existing Terracycle project or start your own.

Earth911 (<http://www.earth911.com/>)

Earth 911 uses your zipcode and their vast database to find appropriate methods for keeping your waste out of the landfill. They also host articles featuring tips for reducing your waste stream.

Composting organic waste!

The City of Chicago has recently legalized private-hauler compost collectors to operate within the city. Food scraps, including many things not compostable in a home bin, can be collected by these compost haulers and kept out of landfills.

The Illinois Food Scrap Coalition maintains a list of compost haulers operating in Illinois at <http://illinoiscomposts.org/resources/service-providers>.