

## **MOST OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RECYCLING.**

### **1. Why does Pasco use blue bags instead of bins?**

Pasco has used blue bags since the inception of our recycling program in 1992. The decision to go to bins had been considered, but under the current garbage hauling system the initial cost to purchase and distribute bins to all our citizens and for haulers to purchase specialized trucks, as well as the cost to initialize, rollout and oversee an education program is prohibitive and cannot be covered without charging our citizens.

### **2. Why doesn't Pasco recycle newspapers, mixed paper and/or cardboard at the curb?**

At this time, Pasco's Material Recovery Facility (MRF) does not have the space or the equipment to adequately accept delivery or to separate paper from our current recyclables. The MRF would need expansion and updating to handle additional recyclables. We do offer drop offs for recyclables including paper and cardboard. The Pasco County schools have an excellent paper recycling program and many of their school sites are open for public drop off. Please visit <http://recycle.pasco.k12.fl.us>.

### **3. Can I recycle more than aluminum & metal cans, glass bottles, and # 1 and # 2 plastic in Pasco?**

These are the only items that Pasco recycles at this time. However, there are private entities that accept and process other items. Please check your yellow pages for such organizations.

### **4. Why can't I recycle more?**

Recycling is market driven, and not everything has a market. In addition, recyclers usually require large, consistent volumes of quality materials in order to maximize the return from that market. Many programs are too small to take advantage of every market and therefore will limit what they accept for recycling.

### **5. Why should I recycle?**

By recycling, you contribute to a sustainable future. Throwing away an item that can be recycled is a waste! Recycling creates jobs, new useful products, extends the life of Waste-to-Energy facilities, conserves resources, saves energy, reduces pollution, and helps preserve our environment for future generations.

### **6. What about business or commercial recycling?**

Pasco County does not require nor offer commercial or business recycling at this time. However, a business can engage in recycling on a private basis. The Pasco County recycling office can provide business owners helpful information on how to "green up" a business.

### **7. How much do we recycle?**

Every year we submit a report to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection which categorizes our recycling in conjunction with our total municipal solid waste stream (MSW). This report reflects everything that is recycled in Pasco not just what we recycle in our residential curbside program. In 2007 we recycled 33% of our municipal solid waste stream (garbage). In 2007, approximately forty percent (40%) of what Pasco recycled was construction and demolition debris materials. Other materials included paper and fiber at eight percent (8%) and recyclables like aluminum, glass and plastic and cans (which are included in our residential recyclable program) at approximately ten percent (10%). Other materials recycled included items like scrap metal, textiles, white goods, and miscellaneous items.

### **8. Which plastic can be recycled?**

In Pasco we recycle code number #1 or #2. The number is located inside the chasing arrow triangle usually located on the underside of a plastic container. Other plastics are recyclable we just don't recycle them here in Pasco. Examples of # 1 and # 2 plastic are drink bottles, milk bottles, detergent bottles, shampoo bottles. Check the bottom of the container and look for a triangle made out of arrows and look for the # 1 or # 2 in the triangle. Those are recyclable in our program.

**9. Can I recycle plastic grocery bags? What about other plastic bags?**

Some plastic bags are recyclable, but not through Pasco County's recycling program. You can reuse grocery plastic bags, or drop them off for recycling at area grocery stores. Other plastics should be put in your regular trash. **Plastic bags are a contaminant in our recycle stream.** Please help us to keep them out of recycling bins.

**10. Can I mix steel and aluminum cans together?**

Yes. You can mix your steel and aluminum cans in your blue bag.

**11. Why should I remove the caps on plastic bottles?**

The cap is made from a different type of plastic than the bottle, and they are classified as a "contaminate" in the load when left on. Also, removing the caps enables the bottles to be crushed more easily so they occupy less space. Please remove the caps from plastic bottles before recycling.

**12. Why do I have to rinse out cans and bottles?**

Food waste is a contaminate in the recycle stream. It makes processing difficult – for example oil from food waste can interfere in the chemical binding process of forming new glass from glass cullet. In addition, it attracts bugs and vermin when set out at the curb and can carry these things into our processing facility. Also, at most facilities including ours, the separation of recyclables involves people.

**13. Do I have to crush aluminum cans or plastic bottles?**

No, but we encourage you to crush cans and plastic bottles in order to save space.

**14. Do I have to remove labels from jars or bottles?**

No, you do not need to remove labels from glass, plastic, or steel containers before recycling them. We ask that you remove lids (and discard them), but labels do not need to be removed since they are easily removed in the recycling process.

**15. Can I recycle aerosol cans with steel cans?**

No. Unfortunately none of our steel can recycling programs accept aerosol cans. You can safely dispose of empty aerosol cans in the trash. If the can is not empty, it is considered hazardous waste, and should be taken to our household hazardous waste drop off.

**16. Where can I recycle newspapers in Pasco?**

Pasco County has five drop offs where you can find a newspaper ONLY container. You can also check with private entities like non-profits, churches, etc. Many will recycle paper to raise funds. The Pasco County schools have an excellent paper recycling program which earns money for the schools. Many of their campuses are open for public drop off.

**17. Where can I recycle other paper products in Pasco?**

Our two main Pasco County drop offs have containers that accept mixed paper. The Pasco County schools have an excellent paper recycling program which earns money for the schools. Many of their campuses are open for public drop off.

**18. Where can I recycle cardboard and why do I have to flatten cardboard?**

Two of our drop off sites have containers for cardboard. Flattening cardboard saves a great deal of space which means that a container can accept more material. When the container doesn't need to be emptied often it saves money on fuel and pickup charges.

**19. Why are pizza boxes not accepted with cardboard?**

Pizza boxes are not recyclable because the grease from pizza contaminates cardboard. Soiled and wet paper products are not recyclable either.

**20. Why doesn't Pasco recycle yard waste such as branches or leaves?**

We do on a limited basis, but only if you bring your yard waste to our West Pasco Resource Recovery Facility at 14230 Hays Road. When we recycle it, we turn it into mulch which we offer free to the public. We do not separate yard waste from your garbage pickup – it goes into the Waste-to-Energy incinerator. If you put your branches in the trash, please make sure it's bagged or in bundles less than 6 inches in diameter and less than 4 feet in length.

**21. Where can I recycle electronics such as TVs or computers?**

We accept electronics and TVs for recycling at our two main drop off sites. That would be the West Pasco Resource Recovery Facility at 14230 Hays Road and at the East Pasco Transfer Station at 9626 Handcart Road. There is a small fee for recycling these items. Please see our page on Household Hazardous Waste, Residential Programs for more on this program..

**22. Where can I recycle used motor oil? Used Cooking Oil?**

Same as above. Please see our page on Household Hazardous Waste Residential Programs.

**23. Where can I recycle household batteries? Car batteries?**

Please see our page on Household Hazardous Waste Residential Programs.

**MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RECYCLING IN GENERAL**

**1. Does the recycle logo mean an item is recycled? What does the number in the logo mean?**

Sometimes. The recycle logo means either that an item can be recycled, or that it is made with recycled materials. The number in the logo refers to the quality of the polymer used to make the item. The lower the number, the higher the quality. Therefore # 1 and # 2 plastic is made from the highest quality polymer. It also is the most marketable plastic. # 3 - # 7 are also marketable, but bring a much lower return and there is less demand for these lower grades of plastic.

**2. What does recyclable mean?**

Recyclable indicates that a product can be recycled. It does not mean that an item is made with recycled content.

**3. What's the difference between curbside and drop-off recycling?**

In a curbside recycling program, recyclable materials (such as cans and bottles) are placed in a special container at the curb for pickup by a recycling truck. A drop-off recycling program provides a center where citizens can transport (drop off) their recyclable materials.

**4. What are the "3Rs"?**

Reduce – decrease the garbage you generate.

Reuse – use an item again instead of throwing it away.

Recycle – take an item that would usually be put in the trash and transform it into a new product.

### **5. What does “closing the loop” mean?**

Buying a recycled product is referred to as “closing the loop” because it completes the recycling process. The recycling process includes three steps:

1) Collect - Recyclables such as cans or bottles are collected.

2) Process - Materials are processed (recycled) into new products which saves raw materials.

3) Buy - Consumers buy the recycled products.

Merely collecting recyclables is not enough; we must buy recycled products in order to create markets. A recycled product is made from a material that was once something else (such as recycled polyester carpet is made from plastic bottles).

### **6. What is the difference between pre- and post-consumer recycled materials?**

Pre-consumer materials (or post-industrial) are factory trimmings or overruns such as paper scraps at a paper mill which are routinely recycled. Post-consumer materials means a product has been used by a consumer (such as yesterday’s newspaper) and collected to be recycled. Look for post-consumer recycled materials whenever possible.

### **7. What percentage recycled content should I look for?**

Items rarely have 100% recycled content, but look for the highest percentage possible.

### **8. Where can I buy recycled products?**

Many places. It is easy to find products with recycled content. The same way you scan a label for calories or fat content, you can check for recycled content. Look on the label for the chasing arrows logo and words such as “contains 50% recycled paper”.

### **9. What recycled products are available?**

Recycled paper products such as facial tissue, paper towels, copy paper, and food packaging are readily available. Read package labels, or ask a store manager for help.

### **10. Where do recyclables go?**

Materials go to an intermediate processor to be prepared for markets, and then are shipped to various manufacturers. For example, newspaper is baled and then shipped to a paper mill to be shredded, pulped, and made into new products.

### **11. How are aluminum cans recycled?**

Aluminum cans are shredded into small “metal potato chips”, melted, rolled, and cut into new cans. The aluminum can you recycle today could be back on store shelves as a “new” can in just 60 days!

### **12. What are aluminum cans recycled into?**

Aluminum cans may be recycled into “new” cans or other aluminum products such as lawn chairs, window frames, pie pans, foil, car parts, or house siding.

### **13. How is newspaper recycled?**

Newspapers are shredded, mixed with water (pulped), screened, aerated (air is pumped in to remove the ink), bleached, and flattened into sheets.

**14. What does newspaper get recycled into?**

The most common use for recycled newspaper is “new” newspaper. It may also be recycled into paper products such as game boards, animal bedding, puzzles, telephone books, or egg cartons.

**15. How is glass recycled?**

Glass is crushed into tiny pieces (cullet); mixed with sand, ash, and limestone; melted, poured into molds; and cooled.

**16. What does glass get recycled into?**

Recycled glass products include “new” jars and bottles, tiles, road paving, marbles, jewelry, and fiberglass insulation. Glass may be recycled an infinite number of times since it never loses strength.

**17. How are steel (tin) cans recycled?**

First, any tin coating on the inside of the can (to protect the food) is removed with a caustic solution to be recycled separately. The steel is then rinsed, melted in a furnace, flattened into sheets, and sold to a steel mill.

**18. What do steel (tin) cans get recycled into?**

Steel cans may be recycled into “new” cans, vehicle parts, toys, appliances (such as refrigerators), fire hydrants, or tools. All steel products contain some recycled material—usually at least 25%! Steel never loses quality or strength so it can be recycled endlessly.

**19. How are cardboard boxes recycled?**

The process to recycle cardboard is similar to newspaper. The cardboard is mixed with water (pulped), processed to remove contaminants such as metal fasteners, screened, pressed into sheets, and dried.

**20. What is cardboard recycled into?**

Cardboard boxes may be recycled into “new” boxes or packaging, brown paper bags, mailing tubes, or paperboard (such as cereal or shoe boxes).

**21. How is paper recycled?**

The process to recycle paper is similar to cardboard or newspaper. Paper is shredded, mixed with water (pulped), cleaned, screened (to remove contaminants such as plastic windows on envelopes), flattened on wire screens, and dried. Paper can normally be recycled 5-7 times before it loses strength. Paper is the #1 item we throw away in the United States (about one-third of the waste stream).

**22. What is paper recycled into?**

Mixed paper may be recycled into “new” paper, tissues, napkins, paper towels, cat litter (really!), or school supplies such as folders, index cards, or notebooks.

**23. How are plastic bottles recycled?**

Plastic bottles are shredded into tiny flakes, processed in a flotation tank to remove contaminants such as labels, heated, washed, melted, forced through an extruder to create long strands, cooled, and cut into pellets.

**24. What are plastic bottles recycled into?**

Plastic bottles may be recycled into “new” bottles, carpet, park benches, picnic tables, pipes, flowerpots, t-shirts, fleece jackets, or sleeping bags. It takes five 2-liter plastic bottles to make one recycled ski jacket. Over half the polyester carpet in the US is made from recycled plastic!