

Recycling Guidelines

PREPARE YOUR RECYCLABLES

Dry

- Clean—give them a quick rinse
- Empty—do not place one recyclable inside another, they need to be separate in order to go through the sorting process correctly; liquids in containers can prevent them from being blown to the right conveyor belt
- **Loose & Unbagged—place recyclables loose in the bin; we cannot process them if they are bagged!**
- Food-Free—remove ALL food
- Caps and Labels are OK—attached lids have a better chance of being recycled
- Separate Materials—remove metal lids from glass bottles, remove plastic lining from cardboard boxes, keep different materials separate
- Flatten Cardboard
- Do Not Flatten Containers—keep them round so our machines can process them
- Size—our machines can process materials larger than 2" x 2" and smaller than 2' x 2'

MATERIALS WE RECYCLE

- Aerosol Cans—must be empty
- Aseptic Cartons—liquid food packaging
- Bulky Plastic & Toys—kid's toys, garden plastics, baskets, pails, buckets
- Cardboard—flattened and dry
- Cartons—milk, juice, soy, drink boxes
- Freezer Paperboard—ice cream and frozen-food containers
- Glass Containers—all colors
- Metal & Aluminum—cans, foil, trays
- Paper—newspaper, office paper, magazines, books, phone books, brown paper bags
- Pizza Boxes—no pizza! cut out the greasy circle if you can
- Plastic Containers—all types, even unmarked, including clam shell containers
- Plastic Film—grocery bags, bread bags, kitchen shrink wrap, bubble wrap, Visqueen
- Scrap Metal
- Small Appliances—including toaster ovens
- Styrofoam—egg cartons, styrofoam cups, packaging styrofoam (but not peanuts); see details below under Advanced Recycling

MATERIALS WE CANNOT RECYCLE

The following materials cannot be recycled at American Waste. Some items like lithium batteries are dangerous to the recycling facility and our employees. Please keep them out!

In Grand Traverse County, visit [RecycleSmart](#) for locations that can recycle these materials, or check the [Michigan Recycling Directory](#).

Tanglers—items like chains, hoses, rope, clothing, clothes hangers and tarps get caught in our machines and shut down the entire facility until someone crawls in and pulls them out, so even if a tangler is made of metal or another recyclable material, please keep it out

- Batteries—batteries of all types are not accepted; lithium batteries are extremely dangerous in recycling centers and recycling and garbage trucks
- CDs & DVDs
- Chip Bags—foil-lined plastic like chip bags and candy wrappers can't be recycled because the foil cannot be separated from the plastic
- Clothing
- Cork
- Diapers—diapers are not recyclable
- Fluids—fluids are not accepted, including automotive and cleaning
- Foam—foam wrap, polyurethane foam, memory foam, latex foam, foams used inside cushions and mattresses
- Glass—mirrors, tv/monitor glass, window glass
- Light Bulbs—fluorescent, tubes, CFLs, LEDs, any type
- Hazardous Waste & Solvents
- Marine Shrink Wrap
- Medications
- Mixed Materials—paper mailing envelopes lined with plastic bubble wrap cannot be recycled because they different materials cannot be separated
- Packing Peanuts—because they make a terrible mess
- Paint—latex and oil-based paints and stains
- Propane Tanks
- Rubber
- Sharp and Dangerous Items—real people sort your recyclables, so please, no needles, sharp scrap metal, or other pointy or dangerous objects

ADVANCED RECYCLING

Recycling right helps keep Northern Michigan green and provides Michigan manufacturers and mills with the high-quality recycled materials they need to make recycled products. We welcome you to take a [behind-the-scenes tour](#) of our recycling facility and learn everything there is to know about recycling in our area, including:

STYROFOAM

People often wonder if styrofoam cups and packaging material can be recycled at American Waste. The answer is Yes! American Waste customers CAN put styrofoam cups, containers, and packaging material in recycle bins and drop off containers.

So, if you get a new TV, the styrofoam that is used to package the TV in the box can be removed from the box and sent to American Waste for recycling. We also accept plastic film, bubble wrap, and other plastic that is used in packaging. But always please be sure to remove the packaging materials from the box. The box should be empty and flat when placed in the recycling bin.

YES, WE ACCEPT:

- Styrofoam used in packaging
- Styrofoam cups
- Styrofoam take-out containers
- Styrofoam egg cartons
- Styrofoam containers

NO, WE DO NOT ACCEPT:

- Packaging peanuts—simply because they make such a huge mess!
- Foam—polyurethane foam, memory foam, latex foam, foams used inside cushions and mattresses

SMALL ITEMS DON'T MAKE IT

Our system shakes out items 2" or smaller, so things like dental picks that are smaller than a credit card have to go in the trash bin. That's why it's best to keep lids on your containers. Take them off only if the lid is made of a material that is different than the container itself.

PLASTIC BAGS AND SHREDDED PAPER

The highest and best way to recycle a plastic bag is to reuse it or return it to the store where you got it. If you decide to recycle your plastic bags curbside, please place all your plastic bags inside one bag and tie it up, so the bags don't make a mess or blow away. This is one of only two exceptions to the "do not bag" recyclables rule. The other: bag your shredded paper, do not place it loose in your bin.

BOOKS

Hardcover and paperback books can be recycled at American Waste. However, the highest and best use for books you no longer want is to take them to [Blue Vase Books](#) or [Goodwill](#) in Traverse City, or to similar locations in surrounding communities. Call your county's recycling information line, or check the [State of Michigan recycling directory](#) for locations near you.

KNOW IT BEFORE YOU THROW IT

Wish cycling happens when you place an item in your bin, unsure if it meets the guidelines, but hoping someone will find a way to recycle or reuse it. You may hear the saying: When in doubt, throw it out. A better option: When in doubt, [contact us](#) or check the [State of Michigan recycling directory](#).