



Green Sense 11/03/2013

America Recycles Day is November 15th!

Did you know that the average American produces 4.4 pounds of trash a day, and in the United States we create over 250 million **tons** of trash a year? That's a lot of opportunity to recycle. To get started, you can take the America Recycles Day pledge at americarecyclesday.org/pledge/.

Since the first America Recycles Day in 1997, the national recycling rate has been increasing, and is now about 35%. With your help, we can raise this even more!

For America Recycles Day 2013, the pledge is quite simply to:

Learn. Find out what materials are collected for recycling in our community at www.readingma.gov/rubbish-and-recycling-division.

Act. Reduce your personal waste by recycling. Pledge to recycle more.

Share. In the next month, encourage one family member or one friend to take the pledge.

Visit www.IWantToBeRecycled.org or for more information on where to recycle materials that our Town's program can't take, how they should be recycled and what products they can become in the future. Nearby recycling centers are also listed. And, don't forget to recycle fabric and used clothing at the Reading Rocket bins at all of Reading's public schools!

Tips for reducing waste at home:

- Reuse items around the house such as rags and wipes, empty jars and mugs, party decorations, and gift wrap.
- Buy products in concentrate, bulk, and in refillable containers. They reduce packaging waste and can save you money!
- Return used car tires to retailers or wholesalers that recycle or retread them. Tires are banned from most landfills, and illegally dumped tires become breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other pests.
- When buying products, check the labels to determine an item's recyclability and whether it's made from recycled materials. Buying recycled encourages manufacturers to make more recycled-content products available.

The recyclable materials in the U.S. waste stream would generate over \$7 billion if they were recycled. That's an enormous opportunity that's lost when we throw away recyclable materials. And recycling also provides jobs. The recycling industry employs over a million workers and generates over \$200 billion in annual revenue.

Recycling saves energy and resources. Here are a few facts from Keep America Beautiful, the sponsor for America Recycles Day:

Recycling Aluminum = big energy savings.

- Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run your television for three hours.
- The amount of energy saved just from recycling cans in 2010 is equal to the energy equivalent of 17 million barrels of crude oil, equivalent to nearly two days of U.S. oil imports.
- Tossing away an aluminum can wastes as much energy as pouring out half of that can's volume of gasoline!

Recycling steel and tin cans = saving between 60 and 74 percent of the energy used to produce them from raw materials.

- Recycling one ton of steel conserves 2500 pounds of iron ore, 1400 pounds of coal and 120 pounds of limestone.
- In the past 50 years, more than 50 percent of the steel produced in this country has been recycled through the steelmaking process, even though in 2009, Americans threw away 10.39 million tons of steel. That amounts to more than \$3 billion in wasted material, or enough to buy lunch for everyone in the United States!

Recycling one glass bottle = saving enough energy to light a 100-watt light bulb for four hours, power a computer for 30 minutes, or a television for 20 minutes.

- Over a ton of natural resources is conserved for every ton of glass recycled, including 1,300 pounds of sand, 410 pounds of soda ash, 380 pounds of limestone, and 160 pounds of feldspar.

Plastic bottles produced in the U.S. in 2009 = 8 billion pounds.

- Every pound of recycled PET used in place of virgin material reduces energy used in production by 84% and greenhouse gas emissions by 71%.

Recycling = Tax Savings. Recycling reduces our waste removal costs.

So take the pledge on America Recycles Day - to recycle everything you can by fully participating in Reading's curbside recycling!

A column by Reading Climate Committee members Gina Snyder and Michele Benson