

Litter, Waste Reduction, Recycling and Closing the Loop

Litter

Research shows that a little litter tends to attract more. This is primarily because littering is the result of people not feeling a sense of ownership for their surroundings. The consequences of litter on the environment and communities are far reaching.

Litter in Our Oceans

As litter is carried by wind, rain, and drainage systems, it eventually ends up in our oceans and waterways. Once there, humans and wildlife pay the cost of misplaced food packaging, snack wrappers, beverage containers, as well as construction debris, tires, and electronics.

Litter on Our Land

On land, litter can create fire hazards, cause vehicle accidents, clog and overload sewage systems, and pollute local rivers and streams.

Litter Costs Us

The cost to try to clean up litter strains federal and state budgets, businesses, transportation systems, schools, and our national parks. Littered communities also suffer from decreased tourism, reduced commerce, and declining property values.

Reduce & Reuse

Some people call this waste reduction. If you make less trash in the first place, or if you find another use for it, that's always the best first option. How can you practice reuse? Donate, repair, refill, rent, rebuild, resell, think of new uses for something before you throw it away.

Recycling

Recycling helps create the products we use every day—from soda containers to writing paper, carpet to automobiles. It mines valuable materials out of garbage, turning old, discarded products into something new. It also helps conserve natural resources, reduce landfilling, save energy and prevent pollution.

According to the U.S. EPA, recycling...

Conserves natural resources to help sustain the environment. Reduces the need for landfilling and incineration. Saves energy and prevents pollution caused by the extraction and processing of virgin materials.

Source Reduction

The first, best option when it comes to trash is not to create it in the first place, or reduce the amount we generate. Source reduction includes such things as backyard composting, two-sided copying of paper, reusing containers, and other simple methods to slow down the amount of garbage we create.

At the point of purchase or use, consumers have the opportunity to consider a product, its packaging, how it is constructed, whether it can be reused or recycled, and whether it is made from recycled materials. By choosing recycled, recyclable or reusable products, we can extend the functional life of a product and divert it from the landfill.

Purchasing recycled products also helps by creating a market for the recycled material, "completing the loop." Consumer demand is a powerful factor affecting the waste stream, and our decisions make a huge difference.

Americans generate 250 million tons of garbage per year. What's *your* impact?

Keep America Beautiful believes that every consumer makes two important choices that affect the amount of waste in America:

- **What products we choose to buy or use, and**
- **How we choose to dispose of the product when finished with it.**

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