

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Reasons Why You Should Recycle

by Jason Brennan



Recycling has numerous environmental benefits. Recycling saves energy, conserves natural resources, limits pollution, and supports several sectors of the economy.

Here are some important statistics from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other resource industry groups that will explain each of these benefits of recycling in greater detail. As you're reading, think how this could positively affect where you live and our environment.

Save Energy

- In 2003, the energy savings from recycling 54 billion aluminum cans exceeded the energy equivalent of 15 million barrels of crude oil – or the amount of gas the U.S. uses in one day.
- Another way to look at it: recycling 1 can = 3 hours of TV, so in 2003 the U.S. saved enough energy by recycling cans to run 162 billion hours of TV, or about 25 hours of TV for every man, woman and child on Earth.
- The Center for Ecological Technology found that the glass industry uses 50% less energy to create glass from recycled glass than from raw materials.
- Americans recycled about 40 million tons of paper products in 2003, creating an energy savings of 163 trillion (yes, with a “T”!) kilowatt hours of electricity.
- Recycling one pound of plastic soda bottles – or PET plastic - saves 1200 BTUs of energy (1 BTU is the amount of energy needed to raise a gallon of water by 1 degree Fahrenheit).
- 2005 saw the U.S. recycle 5 billion pounds of PET plastic, which equals a savings of 60 trillion BTUs of energy.

Conserve Natural Resources

- Americans disposed of 83 million tons of paper products in 2003. According to the EPA, by recycling nearly half of that, we saved 705 million trees and 290 billion gallons of fresh water.
- 4% of U.S. annual oil consumption, or roughly 219 million barrels of oil, goes into the manufacture of plastic. Thus increasing the amount of plastic we recycle can make a significant impact on oil use.

- In 1997, the U.S. recycled 13 million cars, which conserved 32.5 billion pounds of iron ore, 18.2 billion pounds of coal and 1.5 billion pounds of limestone.
- Aluminum can be recycled forever. Over 2/3 of all aluminum ever created is still in use. Most of the 1/3 not still in use is aluminum cans in landfills.

Limit Pollution

- Recycling just half of your annual recyclable household waste saves 2400 pounds of CO₂ being released into the atmosphere. Many scientists contend that human-released CO₂ is a leading cause of global warming.
- Recycling household and car batteries keeps heavy metals such as mercury, lithium and cadmium from being released into our air and water. Heavy metals, when consumed by people and other animals, cause numerous health problems and diseases.
- The EPA estimates that 200 million gallons of used motor oil are improperly disposed of each year. Recycling used motor oil keeps it from polluting your ground and fresh water.
- Americans dispose of 270 million waste tires each year. Illegally-dumped and stock-piled tires are fertile breeding grounds for rodents and mosquitoes, and illegally-burned tires release oil and soot into the air and ground water.

Stimulate the Economy

- Recycling creates a net gain in jobs – 5 to 1 over landfill management.
- Jobs created by recycling cover a wide variety of skill sets, including basic labor, manufacturing, entrepreneurship, advanced science and engineering.
- Recycling creates new “green” technologies designed to take advantage of the reclaimed resources.
- The National Recycling Coalition reports that recycling has created 1.1 million jobs, \$236 billion in gross annual sales, and \$37 billion in annual payroll.

Be a Patriot

Politicians and pundits from both the Left and the Right strongly agree that we should decrease our dependence on foreign oil. As you can see from the points above, recycling makes you a true patriot who’s doing something to make the people and economy of our great nation cleaner, healthier, richer and stronger!

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Green Facts

- Creating a new aluminum can from scratch takes 95% more energy than making a can from recycled aluminum.
- Making a ton of paper from recycled stock saves up to 17 trees and uses 50% less water than making paper from virgin fiber.
- Only 10% of the energy used by an incandescent bulb produces light; the rest is given off as heat.

- If every household in the United States replaced just one package of virgin fiber napkins with 100% recycled ones, we could save 1 million trees.
- In the average home, 40% of all electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. Across the US, this equals the annual output of 17 power plants.
- If you replace just one out of four of your light bulbs with fluorescents, you can save about 50% on your lighting bill.
- A leaky faucet can waste up to 20 gallons of water per day, and a leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons a day.
- Swapping 16 incandescent bulbs for compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) saves emissions equivalent to taking a car off the road for a year.
- Almost 40% of America's waste is paper and could be recycled, meaning fewer trees cut down.
- A standard-sized home solar energy system decreases monthly home energy bills by 40%-60%.
- If every American replaced just one light bulb with an Energy Star compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL), the energy saved could light more than 2.5 million homes for a year.
- A family of four using low-flow showerheads instead of full-flow models can save about 20,000 gallons of water per year.