

General Information about Recycling in Indian River County

Single Stream Recycling – Questions directed for Tropical Recycling

Is the cardboard soiled by the tape, wrapping labels, packing slips etc.?

No- Tape/labels etc. on cardboard packaging are not a major concern for the sorting facility in terms of marketability because the buyers can effectively separate the plastic from the cardboard during processing. In general, the cardboard is crushed/saturated into a “slurry” before it is reformed into something new. The tape and other plastic materials float to the top of the slurry mixture and can essentially be skimmed off the top.

Can the plastic caps that come on cartons be recycled with the carton?

Yes –According to Tropical Recycling, leaving the cap on the carton has not created problems with marketability, and it offers the best chance for the cap to be recycled. After the cartons are sold, the buyer would have a way to remove the caps during processing and either reuse or resell them.

Note: Originally, residents were required to remove plastic caps from plastic bottles/jugs and discard the caps in the trash. Recently, Tropical Recycling has announced that their buyers are able to recycle the caps as long as the caps are securely attached to the bottle.

What are the “worst offenders” at the sorting facility? Where can we focus our educational messaging to have the most impact on contamination issues?

Top 3 worst contamination offenders: plastic films/bags, pressurized tanks (helium, propane etc.), and clothing

Additional problem items: hoses and heavy scrap metals (particularly bulk anchors, chain)

Plastic Film – Questions directed towards the Wrap Recycling Action Program (W.R.A.P)

What is the definitive line as to what can be accepted and what cannot be accepted in the privately supported W.R.A.P program?

Unfortunately, there is not really a definitive line. There are several different plastic film recycling companies that a private business may utilize for their store, and each company may have slight variations in what they accept. As a specific example, I spoke with the Recycling and Solid Waste Department at Publix to verify what they accepted. They said anything that is *clean, dry, and translucent*, with the exception of bubble wrap. The rep explained that Publix excluded bubble wrap from their program as a safety precaution for their staff since the loud popping sounds during processing could potentially trigger PTSD symptoms.

The main basic guideline that is pretty standard for participating stores is that *clean, dry, translucent plastic films* are acceptable. Acceptable items include things like plastic shopping bags, dry cleaner bags, empty bread bags, dry clean produce bags, and wraps around paper towels, napkins, and toilet paper.

Candy/food wrappers, chip bags, six-pack rings and degradable bags are made out of a different kind of plastic and are NOT accepted. Food wrappers/chip bags etc. are also most likely contaminated with food residue and are not acceptable.

Is envelope wrap accepted?

If it is clean, dry, translucent plastic film that does not contain bubble wrap then yes, it would likely be acceptable. The paper envelopes with the bubble wrap lining on the interior would NOT be acceptable for two reasons: 1) the collection bins are for plastic film only so the paper exterior would be considered contamination, and 2) for a store like Publix, the bubble wrap is not accepted for the safety of their personnel.

SWDDs Specific Goals for Fiscal Year 2018/2019

In addition to our regular campaigns, we have established three goals for fiscal year 2018/19 to help increase our educational outreach and bring in more recycling through the SWDD facility.

- Goal # 1: Successfully encourage 5 multi-family communities to utilize recycling pickup services that previously did not have recycling services.
 - Discussions with multi-family communities to date have been on an opportunistic basis (resident or property manager has reached out to us).
 - Fiscal Year 2018/19 we would like to have a program in place where we proactively visit various multi-family communities to provide information, posters, handouts, offer presentations and practical solutions to specific concerns within that community.
- Goal # 2: Successfully encourage 5 commercial entities to sign up for recycling that previously did not have recycling available to their employees and customers.
 - Discussions with commercial entities to date have been on an opportunistic basis. As with the multi-family communities, it is SWDD's goal to have a more robust program in place in fiscal year 2018/19 to proactively engage with commercial entities and offer educational materials and advice on how to overcome obstacles when establishing a recycling program.
 - There are not only commercial businesses, but also various churches, private schools, and organizations that we may be able to encourage to initiate recycling programs.
 - Note: In fiscal year 2017/18, we brought a robust Recycling Pilot Program to four public schools, which doubled the amount of recycling being collected at those sites. The SWDD Board and the School District have agreed to cost share the expansion of the pilot program to the remaining district schools (16 more schools). This falls within the 2018/19 year, but our goal of 5 more locations would be *in addition* to this school expansion project.

- Goal # 3: Increase SWDD’s outbound recycling material by 5%
 - When IRC switched to single-stream recycling at the beginning of fiscal year 2015/16, SWDD saw a 51.5% increase in the outbound recycling tonnages from the previous year under the dual-stream program. Recycling tonnages continued to increase each fiscal year with an 8.5% increase in 2016/17 and about a 5% increase anticipated for fiscal year 2017/18.
 - With the above efforts outlined in Goal 1 and 2 and the rising number of residential homes that are being constructed in IRC (currently a rate of 100 new homes added per month), we are hoping to not only maintain the recycling tonnages collected in fiscal year 2017/18, but actually increase it by an additional 5%.

Summary – What practical solutions can we bring to Indian River County to bring IRC closer to the state’s 75% recycling goal?

First, it will be important to combat contamination issues by continual education and outreach. We have several general recycling advertisements and flyers available, some of which do cite the hazards of plastic films, hoses and heavy metal objects that could damage the machinery. We can add information about how to properly dispose of clothing and pressurized tanks, and why they should never go into the recycling carts. SWDD is also working on an informational video that shows how the sorting process works and takes audiences through the step-by-step process at Tropical Recycling.

Second, we need to establish a more robust campaign that focuses on addressing perceived and existent obstacles for multi-family and commercial entities. The single stream transition brought a lot of single-family homes on board that drastically increased the single-stream recycling shipped to Tropical Recycling (over a 50% increase from the preceding year using dual-stream). There is definitely an opportunity for growth in our recycling outreach to multi-family and commercial entities. There are several more challenges and obstacles to overcome, but with hands-on practical advice, solutions and incentives, I believe we can get more of these larger entities onboard. Commercial entities that produce a lot of cardboard waste would be good targets for recycling outreach since cardboard takes up a lot of space and diverting it from the garbage dumpster would likely allow the business to alter either the container size or frequency of their garbage service. Since recycling services are generally less expensive than garbage service, this “right-sizing” of their garbage service may allow them to add recycling services while minimizing changes to their disposal budget costs. Restaurants and bars may also be good targets for recycling service as the recycling goal is based on weight, and many of them may have a fair amount of heavy glass in their waste stream.

Finally, the biggest direct impact on the County’s overall recycling rate over the last few years has been finding and tracking Construction and Demolition (C & D) material from the private sector that was previously not being reported to the state. Currently, the state and county recycling rates are being calculated based on weight, and C & D material is by far the heaviest product in the waste stream. SWDD will continue investigating unreported C & D material in the private sector; however, there is a large opportunity to directly increase our recycling rate by addressing the C & D material coming into the public sector, which is currently not being recycled. Specifically, clean concrete is actively being separated and stockpiled but as it is not being processed or reused, it does not count towards IRC’s recycling rate. If we could find a way to recycle even just the concrete, we would likely raise our County’s recycling rate by a few percentage points.