

IN THE LOOP!

Free newsletter of MassRecycle, the Massachusetts Recycling Coalition

Issue #2, June-July 2006

Taking out the Trash

Now That Everyone Has a Blue Bin, is Recycling Taken Care Of?



Recycling has been part of our lives for many years now - most of us consider it second nature. Newer and “hotter” problems of global climate change and smart growth appear to be replacing the seemingly mundane task of separating bottles and cans. Now that most residents have access to recycling – either through blue bins or drop-off centers – it might seem like the time to move on to these newer issues.

Is it true that recycling is “all set?” Not even close! Today, Massachusetts residents generate more trash than ever before – we produce enough of it to fill Fenway Park more than 53 times! Over the course of a year, each state resident throws away over 1.3 tons of trash. At this rate, an average family of four fills up a large garbage truck a year!

Only about one third of our waste is recycled. Although this may seem like a large amount, the truth is that many recyclables still wind up in the trash. A recent study of waste in Massachusetts produced astounding results: more than half of the recyclable commodities (paper, metals, plastics, etc) and two-thirds of the compostable organic wastes (food and yard waste) were shipped to landfills and incinerators. Therefore, the average Massachusetts resident throws away more than half of all recyclable or compostable items.

More on next page.

About MassRecycle

MassRecycle is a statewide coalition of individuals, governments, businesses, institutions and non-profit organizations dedicated to realizing and promoting the vital environmental, social and economic benefits provided through reducing, reusing, and recycling waste materials and increasing the utilization of recycled products. For more information, visit www.MassRecycle.org. Join us today!



Recycling Fact:

19,500

the number of Massachusetts jobs supported by recycling

Wake-Up Call

What to Do with an Old Cell Phone and Why You Should Care



Cell phones are everywhere! There are over 130 million people using cell phones in the US today. It is estimated that a new cell phone is purchased every 18 months on average.

According to a report by INFORM, Inc., a nationwide non-profit organization, Americans throw out over 100 million portable devices each year. That’s about 65,000 tons of trash per year including batteries, printed wiring boards and other elements containing antimony, arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, copper, lead, nickel and zinc – all of which are classified as persistent toxins.

These persistent toxins remain in the environment for a long time without breaking down. Some accumulate in the tissues of plants and animals building up to dangerous levels even when very small quantities are released. According to INFORM, such persistent bioaccumulative toxins “have been associated with cancer and a range of reproductive, neurological, and developmental disorders.”

More on next page.

Taking out the Trash *(continued)*

Why should we “resurrect” recycling as an issue when there are so many other problems out there? Of all the reasons, two are most important today:

- **Recycling helps fight global climate change.** Using recycled content for new products instead of buying “virgin” materials or burying and burning recyclable materials result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions. For those who care about preserving our planet’s climate, recycling should be as natural as turning off the lights when leaving a room.
- **Recycling saves tax dollars.** Disposing of most recyclables as trash is consistently more expensive than recycling. Across the state, over 100 million dollars a year is paid to bury and burn recyclables. Clearly, there are better uses for tax and consumer dollars than paying for the disposal of things we choose not to recycle.

What should you do? The answers are simple:

- **Look at your town’s recycling chart** to see if there are things that you haven’t been recycling but should. For Massachusetts cities and towns, this information is available by entering your zip code at www.earth911.com
- **Put out (or drop off) yard waste for composting** on the days when it’s collected. Visit www.earth911.com or see your town recycling chart for information. You can compost yard waste yourself and even throw in some kitchen scraps! Learn how at www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/reduce/compos01.htm.
- **Commit to recycling and composting as much as you can** – at home, work, or at school. Encourage your spouse, significant other, roommate or parent to recycle. After all, it’s going to be less trash for them to take out!
- **Talk to those who do not recycle and find out why.** It has probably been a while since many of us talked to our friends or neighbors about recycling. It’s time to encourage everyone to participate!

Wake-up Call *(continued)*

Most of the persistent toxins contained in cell phones are located in the printed wiring board and liquid-crystal display. Although they are harmless while the phones are in use, once discarded, they become a serious environmental problem. According to INFORM, children are particularly susceptible to toxins that are contained in discarded cell phones because their “developing systems are especially vulnerable to toxic assault.”

While the wireless industry promotes recycling, many people still don’t know what to do with the old phones stashed in their desks, closets or garages. MassRecycle has an answer – recycle your old phones with us! When you recycle your phone through our organization, it’s considered a charitable donation, which means that in addition to helping the environment, your contribution is tax deductible.

Visit our phone recycling webpage to find a drop-off location near you or to get instructions on recycling the phone by mail.

MassRecycle’s Cell Phone Donation Page

www.MassRecycle.org

Click on “Cell Phone Donation” to access the page. Questions? Call (617) 338-0244

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Get a link to the next issue by doing one of the following:

- Sign up online at www.MassRecycle.org using the “Ask the Staff” button or,
- Complete the form below and mail it to MassRecycle, Inc., 60 Thoreau Street, #203, Concord, MA 01742

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