

Waste Reduction

Recycling makes good common sense. It must become a way of living for every citizen and as routine as taking out the trash. Recycling preserves natural resources and reduces the amount of waste requiring disposal.

We all agree recycling is good! However, it is not the best, nor the only means for reducing trash headed for the landfill.

The easiest and most cost effective means to reduce waste is not to create it in the first place. Known as **waste reduction**, it must become our way of thinking as consumers. It's simple:

- ◆ Avoid unnecessary packaging
- ◆ Choose reusable, not disposable products
- ◆ Buy in bulk if you can use it all
- ◆ Buy concentrated products
- ◆ Select recyclable packages such as glass, cans, and #1 and #2 plastic jugs
- ◆ Avoid packages that must be tossed away.

Take reusable tote bags to the store, or select recyclable plastic bags - many stores now offer a recycling program for plastic bags. Then be sure to recycle those bags.

Avoid buying products that are wasteful or environmentally harmful. [Click here](#) or visit www.pwcgov.org/recyclerefuse (Household Hazardous Waste Disposal) or call 703-792-4670 for a list of safe alternatives to harmful chemicals and cleaners.

Let stores and manufacturers know what you want and expect in packaging. Ask them to use recycled content in their packaging. Call their toll free numbers or write to them.

Reuse products and packaging. It is a resource you pay for with every purchase. Think creatively to reuse packaging over and over again. Here are a few ideas:

- ◆ Use trays from packages as organizers
- ◆ Mix paints in plastic salad bar containers
- ◆ Punch holes in plastic tubs for planters
- ◆ Reuse dishes from convenience products

Packaging can be used for storage. Use jars to store small items. Use large boxes to hold videos, tools, toys, shoes, gift wrap and stationary, cosmetics, jewelry, etc.

Buy items that are durable and can be used several times. Rent or borrow items you use infrequently or purchase these items with other people. Refinish, re-dye or repair items. Donate usable but no longer needed items to others or to a worthy charity.

Once we have **reduced** and **reused** as much as we can, then we **recycle**.

But recycling is much more than sorting items out of our trash - that is only the first step in the whole process. Next, we must send those items to a facility where they are turned into new products.

More importantly, we must ask for and buy items made of recycled material. Only then can recycling truly be successful.

Learn more about the County's [Solid Waste Division's programs and services](#).