WHAT CAN YOU SAVE TODAY?
S M T W T F S
RESOURCE CONSERVATION CHALLENGE

The Resource Conservation Challenge

Campaigning Against Waste

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is challenging everyone to rejoin the fight against waste. Although the United States reached a national recycling rate of 30 percent in 2000, our goal is to meet or beat a 35 percent national recycling rate by 2005.

We are conducting an intense campaign to educate and inform Americans about waste's tremendous impact on resource and energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, and pollution. We're asking everyone–businesses and consumers alike–to take steps to reduce our impact on the environment by changing the way we do business and live our lives. By committing ourselves to reduce more waste, to reuse and recycle more products, and to buy more recycled and recyclable products, we can conserve natural resources and save energy. The best part of all is that it only requires each of us to lose one pound.

Let's Tend Our Environment

Accepting responsibility for improving our environment means changing our habits, processes, and practices. This is called environmental–or product–stewardship. The concept is simple: Everyone has a role. Businesses, consumers, and governments work together to make changes across the whole supply chain–from better product design to easier product reuse and recyclability. Manufacturers can make products less toxic and more recyclable and prevent and recycle waste. Individuals and businesses can change their buying and disposal habits. Our goals are to:

- Adopt a resource conservation ethic;
- Operate more efficiently and purchase more wisely; and
- Make and use more environmentally sound products.

We are not only campaigning to educate consumers and businesses about environmental stewardship and its goals, but we also are supporting efforts to help achieve those goals.

Let's Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

We want to help everyone better understand the environmental ramifications of our collective actions. When we see how our purchasing and manufacturing decisions are connected to the environment, we can make better choices that result in increased recycling, less waste, more economic growth, and tremendous energy savings.

In 2000, the national recycling rate of 30 percent saved the equivalent of more than 5 billion gallons of gasoline, reducing dependence on foreign oil by 114 million barrels.

Printed on paper that contains at least 30 percent postconsumer fiber.

Recycling:

- **Conserves natural resources**
- **Reduces greenhouse gas emissions**
- **Preserves ecosystems**
- **Saves energy**
- **Means business**

Recycling has environmental benefits at every stage in the life cycle of a consumer product–from the raw material it's made with to its final method of disposal. Think about all the products and energy we waste when materials go into landfills. In the case of aluminum, for example, we throw away enough every three months in the United States to rebuild our entire commercial air fleet. The amount of energy required to put one ton of aluminum cans in a landfill is more than half a million BTUs. Recycling that ton of aluminum, however, saves the equivalent of nearly 1,500 gallons of gas–enough to run your car for nearly three years.

Products made with recovered aluminum reduce energy consumption by nearly 100 percent. In fact, you could run a computer for three hours from the energy saved by producing just one recycled aluminum can. And, it's not just metals that reap recycling's benefits: a ton of recycled office paper can be made with 43 percent less energy, or 4,077 kilowatt hours.

Computers and other electronic products are the fastest growing–but among the least recycled–components of America's waste stream. In 2,000, more than two million tons of consumer electronics were discarded–enough to fill a one-acre hole 3.5 miles deep. That number can't take into account the millions–possibly billions–of televisions, video games, CD players, telephones, and computers that end up stored in our homes because of a lack of information or opportunities to recycle.

The recycling/reuse industry grosses more than $236 billion per year.

We are committed to maintaining and building markets for recyclable electronics and other materials, as well as to developing and sustaining innovative methods to recycle, reuse, and reduce waste from these products. Don't be surprised when you see recycling messages pop up on your computer, video games, television, and movie previews or on display in stores and shopping malls. By providing consumers and businesses with better environmental education, support, and systems to help achieve realistic results, we intend to change the environmental impact of our American way of life.

Let's Shed a Pound

The two million tons of electronic products that we discard each year are the proverbial drop in the bucket. Americans are the most voracious consumers in the world. We create and maintain the world's largest "trash pile"–nearly 232 million tons of waste per year. Each individual generates about 1.5 tons of solid waste per year–about 4.5 pounds per person, per day.

Each of us generously contributes more than three pounds per day of that waste to the trash pile, but when it comes to recycling, we are misers. Just a little over one pound of our daily waste gets recycled.

Incinerating	**10,000 tons of waste creates**	**1 job.**
Landfilling	**10,000 tons of waste creates**	**6 jobs.**
Recycling	**10,000 tons of waste creates**	**36 jobs.**

The three pounds of waste we discard, however, includes paper, yard waste, food, plastics, and many other materials that could be reused, recycled, or used for energy recovery. We want to keep our daily "wasteline" down, but new wastes and careless environmental practices could make it bulge.

To keep that from happening, we challenge you to lose one pound of waste every day. Instead of throwing away three pounds of trash a day, try reusing and recycling just one pound of it. If you do, you will not only help us beat our 35 percent national recycling goal by 2005, you also will conserve natural resources and save energy. A 35 percent national recycling rate would have the same energy benefit as removing nearly three million passenger cars from the road each year. Imagine what a 50 percent recycling rate could do.

Let's Get Started

Waste management in the United States is steadily improving. Waste disposal systems are cleaner and safer than ever, landfills are closing, and recycling is working. But if we each keep tossing out 1.5 tons of waste a year, that will add up to about 90,000 pounds of trash in our lifetimes. Quite a legacy to leave our children.

Let's change our habits. Let's begin by increasing our individual recycling to two pounds each. Ultimately, we all must accept personal responsibility for our day-to-day actions, and challenge ourselves to do more than one small thing every day to conserve our natural resources. What can you save today?

To Help You Get Started

- **Reduce Your Packaging:** Buy bulk or concentrated products when you can.
- **Reduce Toxicity or Learn How:** Recycle your batteries and use batteries with reduced mercury.
- **Select Reusable Products:** Sturdy, washable utensils, tableware, cloth napkins, and dishcloths can be used many times.
- **Use Durable Products:** Choose furniture, sports equipment, toys, and tools that will stand the test of time.
- **Reuse Products:** Reuse newspaper, boxes, shipping "peanuts," and "bubble wrap" to ship packages.
- **Recycle Automotive Products:** Take car batteries, antifreeze, and motor oil to participating recycling centers.
- **Buy Products Made From Recycled Material:** Many bottles, cans, cereal boxes, containers, and cartons are made from recycled material.
- **Compost or Learn How:** Food scraps and yard waste can become natural soil conditioners.

For More Information

More information about the Resource Conservation Challenge is available at <www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserve/index.htm>. We also are interested in hearing your thoughts and ideas. Please email us at: oswchallenge@epa.gov or write to:

U.S. EPA
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW (5305W)
Washington, DC 20460
Attn: RCC

Information can also be obtained by calling the RCRA Call Center at 800 424-9346 or TDD 800 553-7672; or call 703 3412-9810 or TDD 703 412-3323 (hearing impaired) if you are within the Washington Metropolitan Area.

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