

DID YOU KNOW?

Recycling in Iowa

Recycling is working together to help protect the environment, and it is everyone's responsibility. From individual citizens, to local governments, to businesses and industry, recycling is an important effort. Not only does recycling benefit our environment, but it supports jobs and economic gain in our state.

According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR):

- 1.2 million tons of materials are recycled in Iowa each year (further, Iowa State University states that every ton of recycled paper saves 17 trees; saves enough energy to power an average-sized home for two years; conserves 7,000 gallons of water – the equivalent of nearly 2,000 toilet flushes; and saves 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space)
 - Over 600 communities in Iowa have curbside recycling
 - Recycling results in a net fiscal gain for Iowa local and state governments
-

Many cities across Iowa are promoting recycling efforts. A recent video about recycling in Iowa puts recycling savings into perspective. In the video, Jen Jordan, the Recycling Coordinator for Iowa City asks people to think about the price of throwing something away. It isn't necessarily something that naturally occurs to us when we toss something in the trash. But, building, expanding and maintaining landfills is not cheap. So, when we throw something away to be hauled to the landfill, it may actually be considered expensive! Recycling diverts the amount of trash we throw away and reduces this expense, while protecting the environment. The video is available at <http://citychannel4.com/video/spotlight-jordan.html>.

Recycling helps reduce the expanding demand for space in landfills and requires far less energy and use of raw natural resources, reduces pollution and creates jobs. According to the National Recycling Coalition, manufacturing with recycled aluminum cans uses 95 percent less energy than with raw materials. They note that it also protects wildlife by reducing the need to damage forest, wetlands, rivers and other places. In addition, they say that recycling is a \$236 million per year industry that supports 1.1 million workers in the U.S. Recycled paper and other materials can generally be made with non-hazardous or less-hazardous chemicals, while non-recycled paper is often produced with many hazardous or potentially toxic chemicals.

Though recycling is not a new concept, communities are encouraged by more recent drives to continue to benefit from its efforts. While IDNR estimates that about 35 percent of all waste generation in Iowa was diverted from landfills, it can be estimated that over half of what is thrown in the trash could be recycled. Working together to recycle will help us now as well as in the future.

This article was written by Erin Mullenix, the Iowa League of Cities' research and fiscal analyst and is published here with the permission of the Iowa League of Cities.