

# Recycle Right...

for a cleaner  
San Diego

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**Common  
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**What to do with  
Household Hazardous  
Waste**



**Learn how to  
Recycle Right!**



# Recycling Right: Back to Basics

It's not as hard as you may think

When it comes to recycling, most of us think we know what should go into our blue bins. With a few minor exceptions, those materials are:

- Paper, cardboard, and cartons;
- Plastic bottles and containers;
- Glass bottles and jars; and
- Metal and aluminum cans and foil.

However, people often put many other items into those blue bins that don't belong, or those items aren't properly prepared.

Do you know how to Recycle Right?

With an average of 6 pounds of waste per day generated for each Californian, recycling plays a vital role in helping us reduce our waste, conserve our limited resources, and help produce the raw materials manufacturers want and need — all while using less water and energy than it takes to make items out of virgin resources.

How we think about waste has to change, and it starts with Recycling Right!

**RECYCLING RIGHT** means your items are:

- **EMPTY.** No or very little food residue remaining.
- **DRY.** No liquids remaining. Liquids can ruin paper, cardboard and other materials in the recycle bin making them unrecyclable.
- **LOOSE. DO NOT** bag your recyclables; place them loose in the recycling bin.

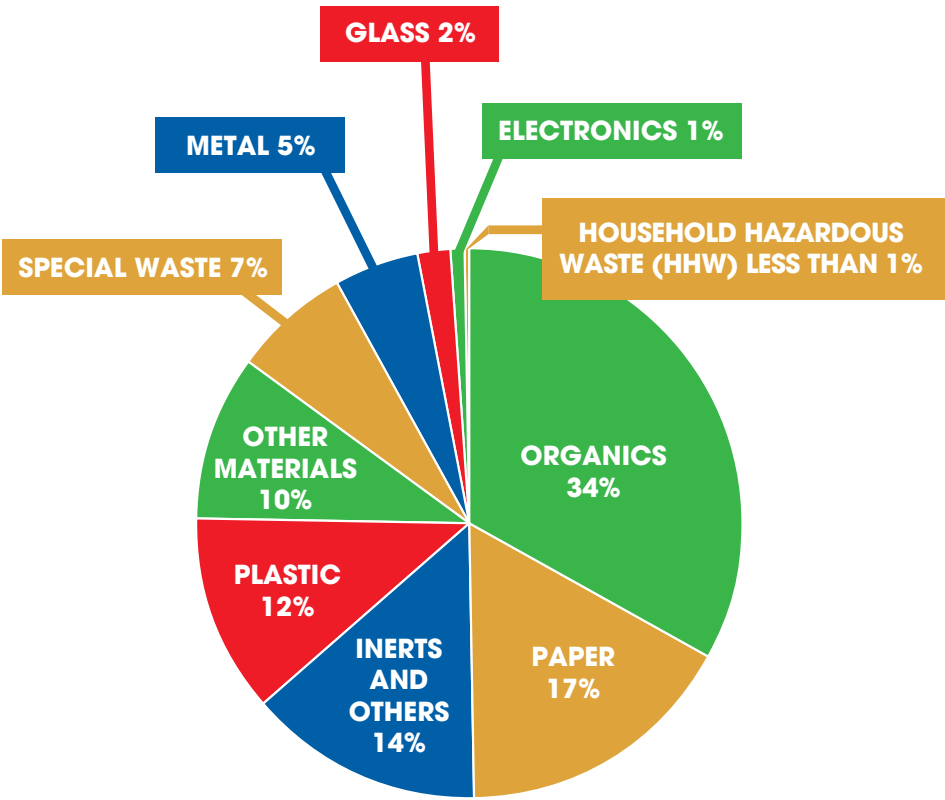
By Recycling Right, you'll ensure your items remain valuable, help make it through the recycling process and won't create a hazard to workers or machinery at recycling facilities.

By Recycling Right, you'll help cut down on **contamination**— anything that doesn't belong in the blue recycle bin such as plastic bags, batteries, clothing, cords, hoses, electronics, food and liquids, napkins and paper towels, straws, plastic utensils and more. Many of those items may be recyclable; just not via the blue bin.

Eric Wolff, Program Coordinator for Solid Waste Planning and Recycling at the County of San Diego, says, "There's a big push to reduce contamination in the recycling bin; up to 20% of what some residents and businesses put in their recycle bin is actually not recyclable in the blue bin. Stopping that contamination starts with the consumer.

"People want to recycle," Wolff adds. "They put items they're not sure about in bins 'hoping' it's recyclable. That's called wish-cycling, and actually causes more harm than good. That's why we're going back to basics."

**BACK TO BASICS** means recycling in the blue bin those four main groups of recyclable items only. By sticking with these four main groups and only placing accepted items in your blue bin, we can help kick contamination to the curb!



## SPECIAL WASTE

includes ash, tires, mattresses, furniture, etc.

## OTHER MATERIALS

includes items that can't be sorted (cosmetics, partially filled food containers, etc.).

## INERTS AND OTHERS

includes concrete, roofing, wood waste and other construction and demolition materials.

Material Classes in California's Overall Disposed Waste Stream. Source: CalRecycle 2018 Waste Characterization Study.

## SIMPLE AS 1-2-3

Recycling Right means eliminating contamination. Before putting items in your blue bin, follow these three simple rules:



### 1. EMPTY

NO FOOD OR MINIMAL  
FOOD RESIDUE.



### 2. DRY

NO LIQUIDS REMAINING.



### 3. LOOSE

DO NOT BAG  
RECYCLABLES.

# The Importance of Recycling Right

Keeping contamination out of the waste stream is a community-wide effort

BY ANNE STOKES

Everyone knows how important it is to recycle, but not everyone knows there's a right — and wrong — way to do it. The wrong materials in the wrong place can create safety hazards for sorters, damage facilities and send valuable resources to the landfill. But it's easy to Recycle Right if you know what goes where and why.

Collected materials end up at a Materials Recovery Facility, or MRF, where they're sorted and sent out to end users to be recycled into new products. However, recyclables are often contaminated with the wrong types of materials. Considering the large volume of recyclables the MRF processes, picking out every misplaced piece is an impossible task.

"There's a lot of different items that people put into the blue recycle bins that shouldn't be there and those items are considered contamination," says Bob Hill, Director of Recycling with EDCO Waste and Recycling. "They're making it more difficult for the processor to recycle things properly."

## HERE'S WHY THAT'S IMPORTANT:

### Safety

Some materials are sorted by human hands. Things like medical sharps, toxic substances such as pesticides and potentially explosive items like batteries and propane tanks endanger sorters at work.

### Damage to Facilities and Equipment

Batteries have been suspected of causing serious fires that cost millions in facility repairs. Other destructive items include metal chains that break sorting line gears and plastic bags that clog sorting screens and require a facility-wide shut down until cleared.

### Loss of Valuable Recyclables

Contamination can cause end users to reject recycled cardboard and paper. Hill says that paper processing mills will only accept these materials with 2% or less contamination. It's everyone's responsibility to reduce contamination in the blue recycle bin, which will make it easier for processors to meet the required standards.



These "tangles" were pulled out of sorting machinery at a Material Recovery Facility.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTHERN RECYCLING & WASTE SERVICES

## TOP 4 THINGS THAT DON'T BELONG IN BLUE BIN



### FILM PLASTICS

- Items include plastic grocery bags, dry cleaning bags, bread bags, produce bags and other thin plastics.
- Gets caught in sorting equipment and forces the entire line to stop processing until clog is removed by employees.
- Tip! Reuse your plastic bags or return them to participating retailers. Visit [WasteFreeSD.org](http://WasteFreeSD.org) to find a location near you.



### TANGLERS

- Includes clothing, hangers, rope, tarps, hoses, chains, cords, etc.
- Will jam sorting equipment.
- Tip! Donate clothing and reusable items to thrift stores.



### ORGANIC WASTE

- Never place food scraps in your blue recycle bin.
- Organics can make paper and cardboard unrecyclable.
- Consider composting vegetable and fruit waste. Discounted bins and free workshops are available; go to [TinyURL.com/CountyofSanDiegoComposting](http://TinyURL.com/CountyofSanDiegoComposting)
- Untreated wood and yard clippings go into the green waste bin.
- Painted, stained or sealed wood must be taken to the landfill. Treated wood (railroad ties, telephone poles, some playground equipment) can be hazardous, but may be taken to certain landfills (call first).



### HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW)

- Items include batteries, paint, propane tanks, medical sharps, electronics, household cleaners, motor oil and filters, pesticides and fluorescent light bulbs.
- HHW materials pose safety risks to sorters, can damage sorting equipment and pollute the environment.
- For HHW disposal locations and options, visit [WasteFreeSD.org](http://WasteFreeSD.org).
- For more information, visit [SDHHW.org](http://SDHHW.org) for appropriate disposal guidelines.



# Recycle This

## PAPER

### No Tissues/Napkins

Newspapers, Magazines,  
Junk Mail & Office Paper

Flattened Cardboard

Paper Containers

Milk, Juice &  
Soup Cartons



## PLASTIC

### No Plastic Bags

Plastic Bottles, Cups,  
Tubs & Containers

Polystyrene  
Foam Blocks



## GLASS

### No Windows, Ceramics or Drinking Glasses

Glass Bottles/Jars  
(Colored & Clear)



## METAL

### No Paint Cans, Unless Dry

Steel & Aluminum  
Bottles/Cans



## Recycle RIGHT! Keep your Recyclables:

### EMPTY

No or  
minimal  
food  
residue.



### DRY

No liquids  
remaining.



### LOOSE

Do NOT bag  
recyclables.



Questions? For more information, visit [www.WasteFreeSD.org](http://www.WasteFreeSD.org)  
or call toll free **1-877-R-1-EARTH** (1-877-713-2784) Se Habla Español.

**PULL THIS OUT  
AND SAVE IT  
FOR LATER**



# TRASH

Plastic Wrap/Wrappers  
Plastic Utensils & Straws  
Compostable Products  
Food Dirty Packaging  
Coffee Cups  
Household Glassware  
Animal Waste  
Diapers



# GREEN BIN

Shrub & Tree  
Trimming  
Grass Clippings  
Leaves



# COMPOST AT HOME\*

Yard Trimmings  
Food Scraps



\*Call 1-877-R-1-EARTH to learn about discount compost bins

# HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Propane & Helium Tanks  
Toxic, Flammable &  
Corrosive Products  
Needles & Syringes  
Medications  
Motor Oil  
Batteries  
Fluorescent Tubes & CFLs



Visit [www.WasteFreeSD.org](http://www.WasteFreeSD.org) for take back or disposal locations

## Donate, Reuse or Return these items:

**Donate** Fabric,  
Clothing,  
and  
Appliances



**Reuse** Foam  
Peanuts and  
Bubble Wrap  
or **Return** to  
Retailer



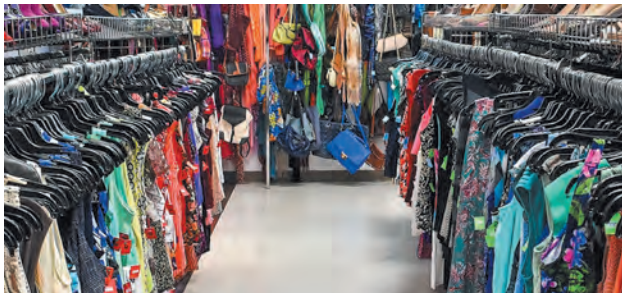
**Reuse** Plastic  
Bags or  
**Return**  
to Retailer



Questions? For more information, visit [www.WasteFreeSD.org](http://www.WasteFreeSD.org)  
or call toll free **1-877-R-1-EARTH** (1-877-713-2784) Se Habla Español.

# Sort this





## HELPFUL THRIFTING HINTS

Sophie Hall ([www.themakegood.com](http://www.themakegood.com)) is a sustainable fashion stylist who keeps clients well-dressed in second-hand vintage. Here are her tips to find your own thrift style:

### KNOW YOUR SIZE

Thrift stores don't always have dressing rooms. Have a favorite pair of jeans? Measure the waist, inseam and rise so you'll have a good idea how something will fit.

### BE OPEN TO ALTERATIONS

Hemming and other easy alterations are inexpensive or easy to do yourself. You'll end up with clothes that fit you perfectly.

### READ WASHING DIRECTIONS ON THE TAGS

Taking good care of clothes will help them last longer, fit better and keep colors brighter.

### CHECK BACK OFTEN

Inventory changes daily at thrift stores. Go often to find high-end labels and luxury brand items.

# Breathing New Life Into Vintage Fashion

Thrift shopping keeps clothes out of landfills and in closets

BY ANNE STOKES

Every year, 1.4 million tons of textiles end up in California landfills. While blue bins may seem like a good alternative, clothing put in them ends up in the landfill anyway, but not before contaminating other materials and clogging up facility machinery.

The best way to repurpose unwanted clothing is to donate to second-hand stores, which is environmentally friendly and has economic and social benefits as well. Even clothing in poor condition can be donated for recycling.

According to Director of Communications Darlene Cossio, Goodwill Industries of San Diego County ([www.sdgoodwill.org](http://www.sdgoodwill.org)) repurposed 13,892,393 pounds of donated items in 2019. With sales revenue from their retail and online stores, the nonprofit provides local jobs and training for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment.

"We have five community employment centers and an online platform in San Diego that provide job search assistance and free soft-skill workshops," she says. "Goodwill has made all of their employment services available online in English and Spanish. If you would like to meet with a Career Advisor online, visit the website and set up an appointment. All of the workshops are held in a virtual classroom every weekday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m."

Sophie Hall, Make Good founder and sustainable fashion stylist, is a reseller who loves thrift shopping. She says growing up as the youngest of eight kids, she learned how to thrift early in life.

Today, she does it because she says it's just a better way to shop.

"Even before environmental issues were at the forefront of everything, I felt it was better, not just because it was more affordable, but the things that I wanted were higher end [and] well-made things that were built to last," Hall says. "The most sustainable piece of clothing is the one we already have."

While not all donated items are sold, Goodwill further ensures textiles stay out of landfills by selling them to recyclers where they can be made into materials such as carpet padding and insulation. But Hall notes the best way to keep clothing out of landfills is by investing in well-made items and keeping them in good condition. She and Cossio both say that with the large volume of donated items that come into thrift stores like Goodwill, there are definitely fashion treasures to be found.

"We get a lot of high-end brands and a lot of product in all categories that are new with tags," Cossio says. "We receive many items that have been worn but still have a lot of life left in them for someone to enjoy."

► **The County of San Diego is home to scores of thrift stores and donation sites. Find those closest to your zip code at [WasteFreeSD.org](http://WasteFreeSD.org).**



**"We have items that have been worn but that still have a lot of life left in them for someone to enjoy."**

*Darlene Cossio  
Director of Communications,  
Goodwill Industries of San Diego  
County*

► Find more tips online at [WasteFreeSD.org](http://WasteFreeSD.org).

# These Items Need Special Attention

Household hazardous waste can be dangerous

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

**S**an Diego County residents and businesses agree on the critical importance of proper recycling for a waste-free county and clean environment. More and more, they're conscientiously sorting their recyclables to keep thousands of tons of resources out of landfills and thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions that degrade the atmosphere.

The county's population is encouraged and assisted by programs sponsored by the County of San Diego Department of Public Works (DPW).

But the recycling scenario is not so clear-cut when it comes to disposing of household hazardous waste (HHW), a specialized niche in the recycling field, says Caitlin Lelles, DPW Recycling Specialist.

"Household hazardous waste encompasses those toxic, yet hard to recycle items that you may find in your home, such as light bulbs, batteries and sharps (needles, syringes and lancets)," she says.

The HHW list is extensive and also includes disinfectants, fertilizer, aerosol cans,

paint, fluorescent tubes and automotive fluids. State, federal and local laws and regulations mandate that such materials go to appropriate collection facilities and not into household trash or recycling bins.

"These items often end up in the trash because people don't know what to do with them, but there are options for recycling them," Lelles says.

Why is proper disposal important? "There are numerous environmental and social consequences associated with improper disposal of HHW into trash and recycling bins," says Environmental Health Specialist Melissa Porter of the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health (DEH).

That includes contamination of soil and water, injury to workers from sharps and leaking household chemicals, and fires at trash processing facilities caused by combustible lithium batteries. The consequences can cost millions of dollars.

"Also, there are safety issues with people storing their HHW for years in garages or

cabinets, (as) containers leak and chemicals mix together, with hazardous results,"

Porter says. "We want to ensure that the public knows there are free options for disposal and recycling of these items available in the county."

Numerous DEH programs continue to help, including dedicated HHW drop-off locations in Ramona, El Cajon and Chula Vista, door-to-door collections for the elderly and disabled, and community disposal events throughout the year. Sharps disposal kiosks are available at unincorporated Sheriff's stations and battery collection bins are located in many County libraries. "Between 80 and 90% of the HHW

brought to proper facilities are reused or recycled," Porter says.

In fiscal year 2018-2019, DEH programs collected about 230 tons of HHW from residents in unincorporated areas of the county.

The DEH sponsored a HHW collection event in March in Borrego Springs; 254 residents brought in more than 16 tons of electronics, flammable liquids, used motor oil, household cleaning products and paint.

Says Porter, "The best part was that all of it was safely removed from the community and properly recycled or disposed of, avoiding any of it going into the trash or down the drain."



**"Between 80 and 90% of the HHW brought to proper facilities are reused or recycled."**

**Melissa Porter**  
Environmental Health Specialist  
County of San Diego Department  
of Environmental Health

## LOOK OUT FOR HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Household hazardous waste (HHW) can create dangerous — and costly — situations for trash haulers and recyclers. It requires special handling for disposal and cannot simply be "tossed."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency breaks down HHW into four groups by characteristics:

- **IGNITIVE**, or something flammable.
- **CORROSIVE**, or something highly acidic or basic.
- **REACTIVE**, or something explosive.
- **TOXIC**, or something poisonous.

### SOME WASTE MAY FALL INTO MORE THAN ONE GROUP

Common examples of HHW include: drain cleaners, paint, motor oil, antifreeze, fuel, poisons, pesticides, herbicides and rodenticides, fluorescent lamps, lamp ballasts, smoke detectors, sharps and needles, cleaning chemicals, nail polish, hair dye and consumer electronics (such as televisions, computers and cell phones). Never transport more than 15 gallons or 125 pounds of HHW at one time. Gasoline must be transported in an approved safety container.



### TO HELP IDENTIFY HHW, LOOK ON PRODUCT LABELS FOR ANY OF THESE WORDS:

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| • Danger  | • Poison    |
| • Warning | • Flammable |
| • Toxic   | • Corrosive |
| • Caution | • Reactive  |

▶ For more information: [SDHHW.org](http://SDHHW.org)





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# Questions?



[www.sandiegocounty.gov/dpw](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/dpw)



WasteFreeSD Hotline: 1-877-R-1-EARTH



[Recycle@SDCounty.ca.gov](mailto:Recycle@SDCounty.ca.gov)

## Department of Public Works

County Operations Center  
5510 Overland Ave., Suite 410  
San Diego, CA 92123

# WasteFreeSD

To learn where and how to recycle  
just about anything:



Find out at [WasteFreeSD.org](http://WasteFreeSD.org)



Call our toll-free hotlines:

Incorporated residents:  
1-800-237-BLUE (1-800-237-2583)

Unincorporated residents:  
1-877-R-1-EARTH (1-877-713-2784)

Live operators are available 8 a.m.  
to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday

The beauty of San Diego is in our  
hands

WasteFreeSD.org is a one-stop zero waste resource that offers information on diversion of household items, recyclables, and household hazardous waste from our crowded landfills. Easy access information connects you to local resources that reduce waste and provides solutions to common day disposal problems. I Love A Clean San Diego maintains information on more than 1,700 centers to help residents and businesses find hassle-free solutions.