

RE/NEWS



Tips and resources for smart residential recycling, composting, waste disposal, and keeping our water clean

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Recycle Better *The Story of Stuff*

In a time when recycling seems like second nature to so many of us, it's also a topic that inspires many questions. What can you recycle? Where does it go? Why should we recycle? What about the caps and lids? How about this container? Does it actually get recycled?

It can be a bit overwhelming. So let's take a journey through the story of stuff and find a few answers along the way.

First, there are some requirements that play a key role in the tale of trash and recycling. WLSSD is the Solid Waste Authority for our region. That means we make the rules about garbage and recycling in our area. Here are the

highlights of the long list of dos and don'ts:

- All residents and businesses are required to have garbage service.
- There is no option to haul your own trash within the District.
- We have a garbage hauling system in our region that allows you to call any licensed garbage hauler you'd like (but you have to have one).

WLSSD also requires that recyclables are kept out of the trash. It is illegal to throw away your bottles, cans, paper, and boxes. Most waste haulers will provide pick-up services for your recyclables

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Visit wlssd.com or call the Hotline at 218.722.0761

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right along with your trash container. If you live in a rural area or need drop-off services, WLSSD provides recycling at the Materials Recovery Center and nine rural recycling sites.

One final key requirement has to do with what happens to all those recyclables once they are collected. Both WLSSD and the State of Minnesota mandate that any materials picked up for recycling must be recycled.



Disposable plastic serveware is just that—disposable. Put it in the trash.

The one exception to this is any “contamination” of the recycling stream (items included in recycling bins that are not recyclable). Contaminants should be removed and disposed of, but all recyclable materials must be marketed and recycled.

“Contamination” may sound harsh, but it’s a result of people being unsure of what should and should not be recycled. Everyone knows the basics—pop cans, glass bottles, metal cans from soups and veggies, paper, boxes, etc.

But what about plastic? That seems to be the sticking point for almost everyone. The biggest source of confusion has to do with those darn numbers that are used to label the type of resin that each plastic item is made from.

Every single piece of plastic from a porta potty to your patio set has a number on it. There is absolutely no association between that number and the recyclability of the item. This may surprise you, but it’s true.

Recycle plastic correctly

It’s easy! Just stick to **Bottles, Tubs, Jugs, Jars, and Lids**. If it fits in one of these categories, recycle it! Skip the numbers on the bottom. Recycle any plastic bottles—water, soda, detergent, juice, etc. Tubs like bulk yogurt tubs, sour cream, butter, etc. Jugs for milk, vinegar, etc. Peanut butter and mayo jars. And all the plastic lids can stay on the plastic containers and go right in the bin.

Now this is the tricky part.....what about everything else? It’s a **NO**.

- NO** to all the clam shells and take-out containers,
- NO** to all the plastic cups and utensils,
- NO** wrappers or film plastic,
- NO** lettuce bins, bakery containers, or berry containers,
- NO** foam of any kind.

It’s all a NO. It’s hard to transition to this new way of thinking, but it’s worth it to ensure that we are creating a strong and sustainable recycling market.

As our waste sorting chronicle concludes, we want to encourage you to continue your efforts to be the best recycler you can. If throwing these materials out really gets you down, do your best to avoid them.

WLSSD is here to offer support for all your waste reduction and plastic avoiding needs. Happy Recycling! ●

DETERMINING RECYCLABILITY

Recycling is a business. In order for any one material to be recyclable, there has to be a company that wants to buy it and make something new out of it. We call this an end market.

With so much plastic floating around in our everyday lives, the end markets have the luxury of being a bit picky about what types of plastics they want to buy.

Even China, which used to be an open door for all things plastic, tightened requirements back in 2017. Lucky for us in Minnesota, China was never a viable end market for our materials, given the lengthy travel time and logistics.

The domestic markets want us to do better. It’s important that we strive to place only recyclable plastics in our recycling bins, and keep garbage out.

TIPS TO REDUCE WASTE



- Pick up berries in bulk or at locations that offer cardboard containers.
- Get bakery items in boxes or bags.
- Buy produce in bulk and use your own bag to tote it.
- Buy reusable cups and utensils or try compostable goods when you need a disposable alternative.

Back-of-House Magic

Local Businesses Recover Organic Wastes

WLSSD’s compost site operators are truly “compost chefs,” whipping up lovely mixes of food scraps and carbon-rich leaves/brush that vary according to the type of material delivered to the site on any given day. The “Daily Special,” or the daily mix in operator language,



Staff put food scraps for composting into designated containers.

depends upon the efforts of hundreds of local food service professionals every day.

This is no accident. WLSSD enacted the Organic Waste Recovery section of the Solid Waste Ordinance in 2007. The ordinance has been tweaked and updated several times over the last dozen years, but the basic rules remain the same. It requires many businesses that produce a large amount of organic waste to recover food and pre-consumer scraps rather than trash them.

The best use for edible food is to feed people through programs such as the Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank, the Damiano Center, CHUM, and Union Gospel Mission. If leftovers are not suitable for human consumption,



Prep stations should have easy access to a food scrap container.

businesses can send their food scraps to licensed animal-feeding operations, such as a pig farm. The last option is to deliver the food scraps to a licensed composting facility like WLSSD’s, where it is transformed into Garden Green® compost, a beneficial soil amendment.

Businesses impacted by the ordinance include many grocery stores, restaurants, post-secondary institutions,

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RECYCLE YOUR FOOD SCRAPS

- Keep a container near the kitchen sink.
- Line the container with a compostable bag (available for free at most drop sites) with the Biodegradable Products Institute logo.
- Fill with food scraps—from prep, plate scraping, fridge clean-out....
- Drop full bags off at a Food Scrap Drop Site.



FOOD SCRAP DROP SITES

YARD WASTE COMPOST SITE

27th Ave W & the Waterfront
Free bags available from staff

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE FACILITY

27th Ave W & the Waterfront
Free bags available from staff

MATERIALS RECOVERY CENTER

Rice Lake & Ridgeview Roads
Free bags available from staff

WLSSD Locations available during regular facility hours. Check wlssd.com for hours.

MARSHALL HARDWARE

Parking lot at 4415 E. Superior St.
Bags for sale in store

CHESTER CREEK CAFÉ

1902 E. 8th St.
Free bags inside café

WILLARD MUNGER INN

7408 Grand Ave.
Free bags available from staff

LAKE SUPERIOR COLLEGE

W-building parking lot at 2101 Trinity Rd.

Free compostable bags also available at WLSSD Office, 2626 Courtland Street, Duluth

Email gardengreen@wlssd.com with questions.

Back-of-House Magic...

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hospitals, nursing homes, food manufacturers, assisted living facilities, and correctional facilities. "Pre-consumer" refers to the prep scraps and prepared foods that never leave the kitchen, or items like expired produce at a grocery store.

Back-of-house staff work hard every day to get these valuable materials to the right place. WLSSD applauds the efforts of kitchen managers, chefs, cooks, dishwashers; produce managers, butchers, and bakers; food manufacturing staff and more. These are the professionals that work behind the scenes to keep organic "waste" out of the landfill.

The program has grown to include about 135 required establishments plus many more businesses that separate food scraps on a voluntary basis. Practices have changed, too.

Many restaurants have found that it doesn't take a lot of extra effort to collect post-consumer plate scrapings, but it can really help reduce the volume of material in the trash bin. Businesses invest by training staff, purchasing organics hauling services, and providing the space and time to separate.

The sorting, scraping and collection of organic wastes add up. Our region diverted nearly 4,000 tons of food scraps from the landfill to our compost site last year.



Adding plate scrapings to the food scrap container reduces trash volume.

So the next time you enjoy a meal out on the town, ask your server about the back-of-house magicians that not only work wonders with your meal, but with the leftovers, too. •

Using the MRC —as easy as 1-2-3

- 1 You'll unload the vehicle or trailer in different locations within the MRC so if it's in order everything will be easier.

What gets loaded in first will be the last thing you drop off. Here's the order: TV, old printers and other electronics go in first. Next are household recyclables. Then, any appliances or tires (be sure to have easy access to the fridge door so you can show MRC staff it is empty). And then, general junk such as that broken couch or whatnot. Finally, load the items you think can be used again.

At the MRC, everything comes out in order as you drive around the site.

- 2 You'll unload it yourself so if you need help, remember to bring a friend.

- 3 Wait times at the MRC can sometimes be up to 45 minutes. Plan your day accordingly and remember to build in enough time to get all of the unloading done before closing.

RECYCLE LIKE A PRO



- 1 Flatten as many of your containers as possible to save space and make transporting recyclables more efficient.
- 2 Rinse containers and remove caps from glass bottles. Keep plastic caps on plastic bottles.
- 3 Don't put plastic bags in your household recycling bin. Use paper bags to collect recycling since the bag can be recycled with other paper.
- 4 Shop wisely. Buy reusable, returnable and recyclable items. Buy items made from recycled material.



WESTERN LAKE SUPERIOR SANITARY DISTRICT

FACILITY HOURS

For holiday hours or questions,

Visit wlssd.com or call

the WLSSD Hotline at 218.722.0761

Materials Recovery Center

Corner of Rice Lake & Ridgeview Roads

Mixed waste	\$22/cu yd
Microwaves	1 free per day, \$5 each add'l
Appliances	\$5 each
Tires*	4 free per day, \$3 each add'l
Household Electronics	\$15, 12, 9, 2 or FREE
Recyclables, fluorescent bulbs, metal	FREE

*other prices apply for larger commercial & off-road tires

YEAR-ROUND

Tuesday	9am - 4pm
Wednesday	9am - 4pm
Thursday	9am - 4pm
Friday	9am - 4pm
Saturday	9am - 4pm
Sunday, Monday	Closed

Household Hazardous Waste Facility

27th Ave West & Courtland Street

Paint products	FREE
Button batteries	FREE
Used oil and filters	FREE
Chemicals and pesticides	FREE
Fluorescent bulbs	FREE

YEAR-ROUND

Thursday	9am - 4pm
Friday	9am - 4pm
Saturday	9am - 4pm
Sunday - Wednesday	Closed

Yard Waste Compost Site

27th Ave West & Courtland Street

Grass, leaves, garden debris	FREE
Brush and branches	\$10/cu yd
Dirt and sod (3 cu yd limit)	\$8/cu yd

Garden Green® compost also available for purchase

MID-APRIL THROUGH MID-NOVEMBER

Friday	9am - 4pm
Saturday	9am - 4pm
Sunday	9am - 4pm
Monday - Thursday	Closed

Residential prices are listed. Non-residential customers call 218.722.3336 for pricing.

Recycling Beyond the Basics

at the Materials Recovery Center (MRC)

Even for all of you who recycle diligently, a few difficult-to-handle items are well—hard to handle. We get it. And we're doing all we can to help you at WLSSD's Materials Recovery Center on Rice Lake Road. The MRC accepts a lot of odd items—from scrap metal, concrete and that old VCR player to tires, blenders, and plastic bags.



Old electronics can be recycled for a fee.

You can do the right thing with a lot of difficult stuff, too. Scrap metal? Yep. Brush? Yep (although our Yard Waste Compost Site at the 27th Avenue W location is even better!).

How about those oh-so-troublesome plastic bags? Yep. Make sure the bag is recyclable: push your finger into the film and see if it stretches. If so, bring it on (unless it's a black garbage bag—sorry). Cut off string ties, hard plastic handles, zip closures and other hard plastic parts. Then bring them up with everything else in your load.

Big stuff like refrigerators? Yep. We'll accept it for a small fee and make sure it's recycled. Microwaves? Yep. One per day is free, in fact.



Your first four tires from the family vehicles are free. Additional tires are a small fee to recycle.

Other small appliances? Yep—vacuum cleaners, rug cleaners, electric fans, blenders and juicers, bread machines. Unless, of course, you gave up juicing carrots and the juicer still works—we'll put items like that in the MRC Reuse Area in case somebody else wants it.

Does it sound complicated? Yep, it can be for unusual items. We have a few

ways to help you through it. Start with visiting our website, wlssd.com, and clicking on the disposal guide. You can also call our hotline during business hours at 218-722-0761. •

MAKE YOUR NEXT EVENT WASTE-FREE!



1

What's on the menu? If it's all finger food, you might be able to skip plates and utensils altogether. Bigger items on the menu? Opt for reusable goods whenever possible.

2

Is your group too large to outfit with your own forks and knives? Try compostable serveware! Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) certified starch-based utensils and cups are available and accepted for composting at WLSSD's organics site. Separate them along with the food scraps from your event to help with your waste-free efforts!

3

Don't forget the little things! Wrappers and packaging add up. Avoid creamer cups and sugar packets. Serve condiments in bulk. Use platters and bowls to serve food family style instead of individually wrapped.

4

WLSSD has recycling and food waste containers available for use, free of charge. Give us a call to reserve bins, bags, and signs for your event!

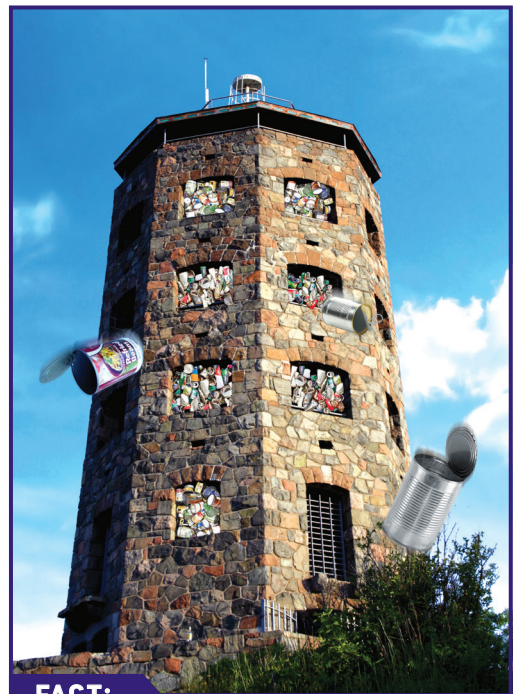
Summer Stretch

Plastic Bags and Shrink Film

Film plastic is another type of waste that is puzzling to many of us. Bags of film and packaging pile up while we scramble to find ways to deal with it all. Pallet wrap, bags, and other film plastic is recyclable, but cannot be included with traditional recyclables. The bags gum up the gears in the automated process used to separate mixed cans, bottles, and paper. This makes recycling all those bags a bit trickier.



Bags are instead collected at designated drop-off sites located at most grocery and department stores. Some WLSSD facilities also provide free film plastic recycling for residents. Businesses can contract with a local waste hauler to set up film plastic collection service on site; call WLSSD for more information, 218-722-3336.



FACT:

IN THE NORTHLAND, WE
STILL TOSS MORE THAN
435 TONS OF STEEL CANS
EVERY YEAR. THAT'S
ENOUGH TO FILL ENGER
TOWER THREE TIMES.



We've made great progress in keeping recyclables out of our landfills. But the facts show that we have a long way to go. Learn what you can do to recycle more at wlssd.com.



RE/NEWS



Recycled paper made with 10% post-consumer waste,
processed chlorine-free

A newsletter about solid waste and wastewater treatment within the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, published for residents of the WLSSD service area. Comments and questions are welcome at re-news@wlssd.com or 218.722.3336. WLSSD provides award-winning wastewater treatment and solid waste management for a 530-square-mile service area in St. Louis and Carlton counties.

WESTERN LAKE SUPERIOR SANITARY DISTRICT

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