



RECYCLING

Okaloosa County is committed to recycling and has partnered with Waste Management, which is the largest recycler in North America. Products that you place in the bin will go on to the recycling journey and become new products. Your cardboard and cereal boxes, water and soda bottles can be turned into new products such as clothing, shipping boxes and playground equipment.

What else can recycled materials be turned into? A variety of new paper products such as cardboard boxes, napkins, and printer paper, pellets for packing, new cans for soda, fabrics and even carpet. Did you know that the carpet at VPS Airport is recycled fishing line? Check out blue carpet the next time you are in the Airport!.

When visiting the local recycling facility on Ready Avenue in Ft. Walton Beach recently, it was interesting that so much of the process is automated and uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to sort products. Thousands of tons of products are processed each day. To watch a quick video of the machines in action, type <https://bit.ly/RecycleRightinOkaloosa> into your search browser. It's amazing!

The drivers pick up your recyclables and take them to the plant to sort. The material is loaded into a drum feeder for the first stage of sorting. Optical Sensors use AI Technology that takes over to sort glass, aluminum, paper and plastics. After the material is collected, sorted and baled, they are sold to manufacturers to be used again. This is crucial to advancing a circular economy where products can be used again and again. Waste Management is committed to insuring a more sustainable tomorrow.

Here are four simple tips to help you recycle correctly:

- Recycle *clean* bottles, cans, paper, plastic containers (#1, #2, #5) and cardboard
- Flatten all cardboard and paper board for recycling
- Keep batteries, propane tanks, liquids and food out of your recycling
- Do not bag your recyclables.

Plastic trash bags are a big issue at the plant. Please do not place plastic trash bags in your recycling nor use plastic bags to contain your recyclable materials.

The most important take-away from this newsletter is this: please do not put anything into plastic trash bags or take-home grocery bags. Recyclables stuck inside plastic bags are at risk for never making it through the recycling process.

Things that should *not* go into your curbside recycling bin are

- Flexible packaging like chip bags and juice or soup pouches
- Cups with plastic or waxed coatings – even the plastic lids should be trashed
- Polystyrene foam "to-go" containers and cups
- Tanglers or twists like old rope, cord, or water hoses can wrap around equipment, endanger workers and shut down entire recycling centers.
- Clothing, textiles, shower curtains, mini-pools, fencing and furniture
- Medical waste, car parts, scrap metal, tires, oil filters, propane cylinders and the like pose a safety hazard and should never go in curbside recycling or waste bins.

Remember, recycling works when we work together as a community!

It is an honor to serve as your County Commissioner.

My Sincere Thanks,
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