

Textile Recycling

Why is recycling textiles so important?

The U.S. EPA estimates that textile waste occupies nearly 5% of all landfill space in the USA.

Although the EPA estimates that the textile recycling industry recycles approximately 3.8 billion pounds of post-consumer textile waste (PCTW) each year, this only accounts for approximately 15% of all PCTW, leaving 85% in our landfills. The average US citizen throws away 70 lbs of clothing and textiles yearly.

In addition, a recent study published by MassDEP indicated more than 230,000 tons of usable textiles - including clothing, footwear, towels, bedding and other fabric-based products - were sent to landfills and incinerators in Massachusetts in 2010. It is estimated that 95% of all clothing and household textiles can be recycled or repurposed.

What are textiles?

Many people don't know that items such as: clothes with rips and stains, throw rugs, curtains, old towels, sheets, worn out blankets, bed pillows, stuffed animals, sneakers or shoes (even single), flip flops, pocketbooks, woolens with holes, stained silks, sewing fabrics, belts, neckties, undergarments, used socks and other fabric based items.

What is being done with textiles?

Items listed above are highly desired on the secondary recycling market. Most large charitable organizations that accept clothing also accept textiles like those mentioned above and have the infrastructure in place to transfer material that can't be "reused as received" to textile recovery facilities. It is here where the textiles are reprocessed for new goods.

Some materials are converted into wiping and polishing cloths. Cotton can be made into rags or form a component for new high-quality paper. Woolens and woven materials are "pulled" into a fibrous state for reuse. Other types of fabric can be reprocessed into fibers for upholstery, emergency shelter blankets, rug pads, and insulation. Buttons and zippers are stripped off for reuse. Very little is left over at the end of the recycling process. The remaining natural materials, such as various grades of cotton, are composted.

What can you do to make a difference?

The next time you provide a clothing donation, include the “undesirable” textiles as well. Your actions will reduce municipal solid waste currently going into landfills and incinerators in Massachusetts, support the recycling market, help reuse and conserve natural materials. Take the extra step to be sure that your donated items are clean, dry, without mildew or hazardous stains. That way they will be recycled to the fullest extent.

What can you do right now?

- **Bulk Waste/Textile Collection Event** -The Hardwick Recycling Center located at 2011 Barre Road, Wheelwright, MA is holding a Textile Collection at the facility during our Bulk Waste Day Event on Saturday, November 2nd, 2013 from 8:00am to 12:00pm. Start your spring cleaning by going through your closets, attics, storage spaces, linen closets, shoe racks, etc. for any textiles you would like to get rid of. Again, don't be afraid to include those hole ridden mismatched socks, worn out blankets, etc. and even that one shoe with no match to be found! Then load them up and bring them in during this event. You do not need a recycling sticker to participate in this event. It is open to all residents and surrounding towns. There are fees for bulk waste items; however there is no fee for textiles. **No carpets. Throw rugs are okay.**
- **Drop-Off Location** - Planet Aid containers are located at the Hardwick Recycling Center and are available for use 7-days per week. Be sure the items are bagged in 13 gallon bags or less in order to fit into the drop-off containers.