

Preserving the environment through integrated recovery and disposal.

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Recycling Q&A and Other Friendly Reminders

The Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority (Authority) regularly receives questions and comments about the recycling process. Here are some answers to the most frequently asked questions!

Q: What is the difference between a wet strength box and a carton?

A: A wet strength box is any kind of box that goes in your refrigerator or freezer like soda can or popsicle boxes, for example. Wet strength boxes have a chemical in them that keep them from breaking down in case they get wet. This chemical cannot be removed from the paper fibers that make up the box, therefore wet strength boxes are not recyclable. Cartons, on the other hand, are recyclable. This is because instead of having a chemical mixed with the paper fibers to help protect them, the paper fibers have a protective waxy coating that can be removed at recycling mills.

Q: How much plastic is actually recycled? I heard most plastic doesn't get recycled and a lot of it ends up in the landfill.

A: The Authority has one of the most comprehensive recycling systems in New York State. We accept the items that we do (whether it is plastic or another material) because we have an outlet for that material to be recycled. It would be a waste of money, time and energy to advertise that we accept plastic for recycling, just to only collect a few types and send the rest to the landfill. Of the plastic that comes to the recycling center, about 10% is landfilled because of contamination from "wishcycling" (or, putting items in the recycling bin hoping that it will be recycled), dirty recyclables, and lack of education. We have one of the largest accepted lists in the state due to our single stream processing system and therefore can accept more types of the many kinds of plastic than our surrounding counties. In 2022, we marketed 2,070 tons, or 4,140,000 pounds of plastic for recycling.

Q: Does it matter if plastic bottles or glass jars have their lids/caps on?

A: When you are recycling plastic bottles and glass jars, you can rinse them out and put the lids right back on them. The plastic and metal lids are recyclable but may not be recovered for recycling if they are not on their original container.

Q: Are pizza boxes recyclable?

A: This is something that we leave up to residents' discretion. If the box has a lot of grease or cheese stuck to it, then it would be better to put it in the garbage. Otherwise, it can be recycled.

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Q: Why do my garbage and recyclables go in the same truck?

A: Some waste haulers use split body trucks. In these trucks they can collect garbage and recyclables at the same time, helping cut down on the time it takes for them to complete a collection route. When they arrive at our facilities, the garbage side of the truck is emptied in the transfer station and the recycling side of the truck is emptied in the recycling center. If you have any issues with how your waste is being collected, you can contact your waste hauler directly so they can address the issue. City of Utica residents can contact the Authority's Utica Coordinator at (315) 731-0238 with any waste collection issues.

Q: Where can I get rid of paint when the Authority's HHW facility is closed?

A: Paint is now accepted for recycling at participating retailers through a program called PaintCare. PaintCare is a program of the American Coatings Association and was established in New York State in 2022. When you buy paint there is now a small added fee which helps fund the PaintCare program. Paint that is recycled through this program is either reused or processed into fuel. More information about PaintCare can be found here: <https://www.paintcare.org/states/new-york/>.

Friendly Reminders:

- The Authority accepts all plastic bottles, cups and containers regardless of what number they have on them. The only exception to this is Styrofoam, prescription medication bottles and motor oil bottles.
- Don't trust the triangle! Not all items are recyclable through the Authority's programs, even if they say they are. You should always follow your local recycling guidelines because they are based off of what the local system is able to process.
- Plastic film, electronics, and clothing are all examples of "tanglers," which are items that can very easily get stuck in the machinery at the recycling center. These items are not accepted through curbside recycling and they should not be placed in your recycling bin. Instead, plastic film can be brought to a participating retailer for recycling, electronics can be brought to our Utica or Rome EcoDrop, and clothing can be placed in one of the many clothing donation bins in our area.
- The Authority's EcoDrops are open year-round and are located at 80 Leland Ave Extension in Utica and 575 Perimeter Road in Rome. The Authority's Household Hazardous Waste facility is located at the Utica EcoDrop and is open April through September.

If you have any questions about recycling or any of the Authority's additional programs, please contact us at 315-733-1224 or ohswa@ohswa.org. The Authority can also be found on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.