

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Understanding Recycling

(NAPSA)—Here's good news, for a change, about our environment: Americans have more than tripled the amount of materials they recycled in the 1980s—more than a third of the country's household waste—thanks to technological advances by the waste industry that collects, sorts and processes America's recyclables.

How It Works

Nearly 10,000 communities nationwide now have curbside recycling pickup, taking recyclables directly from bins at homes. Many communities use single-stream recycling, through which all recyclables are placed into the same bin for collection and sorting.

From there, recyclables arrive for sorting, either at a community transfer station or a materials recovery facility (MRF). High-tech innovations at MRFs help automate and streamline the sorting and separating of commingled recyclables, while dedicated workers oversee the process. Sorting recycled materials lessens the chance for contamination and better prepares the materials to be repurposed.

With screens, optical scanners and conveyor belts, MRFs sort materials with precision. These facilities also employ magnets and electric currents, called "eddy currents," that separate aluminum cans from the rest of the waste stream. Materials are then baled, shredded, crushed or compacted before being shipped to manufacturers to be turned into new products.

These innovations make recycling more affordable for communities, reduce the amount of waste going to landfills, cut greenhouse gas emissions and lessen the envi-



Millions of Americans participate in recycling programs. Where does it go? It's getting to the right place through a process that begins with a bin.

ronmental impact of household waste. Simplifying the recycling process also encourages greater participation.

"The items you place in your recycling bin or cart—aluminum and steel cans, newspapers, glass bottles and jars, plastics, cardboard and corrugated boxes—do, in fact, make it to a recycling facility," explained Sharon H. Kneiss, president and CEO of the National Solid Wastes Management Association. "Americans who recycle should rest easy that by recycling they are helping save energy and conserve vital natural resources.

"There are still communities where curbside recycling isn't being offered. Consumers who want these services should get in touch with community officials to encourage more recycling," said Kneiss.

Learn More

Visit www.beginwiththebin.com for further facts and stats on state-of-the-art recycling systems and how they work.