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A PROGRAM OF **SMART** THE SECONDARY MATERIALS AND RECYCLED TEXTILES ASSOCIATION

Media Kit



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about us

What does “SMART” stand for?

Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles (SMART) – established in 1932, SMART is a recycling-based, international, nonprofit trade association comprised of used clothing, wiping material and fiber industry companies. SMART companies are committed to the “green” way of life. SMART’s slogan – *“SMART was green before green was SMART.”*

Mission and Vision of SMART: SMART is the leading industry voice, promoting high standards and best practices for reducing solid waste by recycling textiles and related secondary materials. Our members collect, reuse and “close the loop” by processing, converting and distributing these recyclables.

As the foremost, international, textile recycling trade association, SMART is dedicated to providing our members with exceptional opportunities for networking, education and trade.

What Our Member Companies Do

An estimated \$1 billion industry, SMART companies acquire both unused and used (pre and post-consumer) textiles* for reuse and recycling purposes. SMART companies are diverse; however, the two core business models include SMART’s pre-consumer and post-consumer markets:

Pre-consumer Market – material acquired prior to consumer use (pre-consumer).

SMART member businesses purchase secondary material** (by-product) from textile and fiber companies. The textile and fiber manufacturers would otherwise discard the unused material (by-product) that could not be used during the manufacturing process.

Once acquired, the material is inventoried and processed. SMART member companies then repurpose the excess material into a variety of consumer products (e.g. wiping cloths, automobile insulation and home furnishings, etc.).

Post-consumer Market – material acquired after consumer use (post-consumer).

SMART member companies purchase excess textile donations from charities and commercial sources (i.e. non-profits, thrift stores, hospitals, hotels and industrial laundries etc.). The purchase of unusable donations provides additional funds to charitable organizations and serves as a critical source of revenue to support their ongoing, community-based programs. Clothing collection bin programs are another convenient way consumers are able to recycle unwanted clothing and textiles. SMART encourages the public to educate themselves before utilizing a local clothing collection bin. Consumers should understand whether the bin operator is a for-profit or non-profit organization, they should be able to contact the operator and/or charitable partner, and they should observe that the bin is well maintained (i.e. the area around the bin is neat and clean).

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SMART companies sort and grade the used clothing based on quality, condition, and type. Once sorted, the used clothing and textiles are reused and recycled in one of the following manners:

45% is re-used as apparel. These items are generally processed into large bales that are then sold in the U.S. to the secondhand clothing industry or are exported to emerging market nations where demand for top quality secondhand clothing is particularly high.

30% of the recovered textiles are cut into wiping rags or polishing cloths that are then used in commercial and industrial settings.

20% is reprocessed into its basic fiber content. The fibers are then remanufactured to create furniture stuffing, upholstery, home insulation, automobile sound-proofing, carpet padding, building materials and various other products.

5% is unusable. If the textiles are wet, moldy, or contaminated with solvents they are not fit for recycling, and are discarded.

SMART Membership

SMART currently represents nearly 200 companies, ranging in size from several to hundreds of employees. SMART member companies reuse and recycle both pre-consumer and post-consumer textiles. Most SMART member companies are family-owned businesses with fewer than 500 employees. The majority of these companies employ between 35 and 50 workers, many of whom are semi-skilled workers. The industry provides meaningful jobs for more than 20,000 people in the United States who locally drive our economy and preserve our environment.

Where We're Located

79% United States

13% Canada

8% International Countries [*Mexico, South America, Central America, Europe, Asia and Pacific Rim*]

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general fact sheet

SMART members continually trumpet their message to the donating and recycling public by encouraging them to “Donate, Recycle, Don’t Throw Away.”

SMART companies are an economic stimulus through market creation, small business promotion, job creation, charitable funding, recycled product development and the stimulation of affordable clothing markets. The textile recycling industry in the U.S. provides a significant source of employment and revenue.

SMART has established Codes of Conduct whereby its members have agreed to abide by the ethical and moral standards outlined by the Association, thus distinguishing SMART members from other companies in the industry.

The Code of Conduct for clothing collection bins operated by SMART member companies requires the operator to abide by the following guidelines:

- Clearly state whether they are a for-profit or non-profit organization;
- Provide contact information;
- Obtain permission before placing the bin;
- Obtain a permit (if applicable);
- Comply with local zoning regulations;
- Service and maintain the bin on a regular schedule;
- Respond in a timely manner to concerns.

The textile* recycling industry is comprised of many small businesses with no single company controlling more than 4% of the market.

Until recently, charitable organizations were the primary outlets for donating (recycling) clothing. The Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association is continuously working to educate the public and local government officials about the importance of increasing clothing and textile recycling. The benefit of these educational outreach efforts is gaining momentum throughout the nation, but especially in the New England area. Representatives of SMART, along with representatives of major charitable organizations, recently held a series of ‘textile forums’ with solid waste officials throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which were sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

“There has been a clear and significant change in the perception of clothing and textiles as recyclables as a result of the MassDEP meetings,” says Paul Curry, President of Bay State Textiles and one of the SMART presenters. Curry says, “By presenting along with charities, SMART, and the MassDEP, we are able to show the municipalities that it’s ‘OK’ for them to work with the for-profit portion of the clothing recycling industry. Our message is that the ultimate

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goal is to divert clothing out of landfills and into the recycling stream through the most convenient route for the public.”

In addition to MassDEP, SMART officials and member company representatives have made similar presentations in Connecticut with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), in Rhode Island with the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) and in New Hampshire with the North East Recycling Council (NERC) among many other meetings and presentations with state officials throughout the region. In other jurisdictions such as Washington State, Colorado, Texas, Arizona, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and California, SMART officials are also working with local officials and recycling organizations to expand clothing and textile recycling programs and educate the public about the impact clothing recycling has on the environment.

Ease and convenience is critical to increasing the public’s participation in recycling programs. For example, curbside recycling of aluminum cans, paper products, plastic and glass has dramatically increased the recycling of those materials. Several municipalities have added curbside collection of clothing and textiles to their local recycling programs. Clothing collection bins are another convenient option that encourages the increased recycling of clothing and other household textiles. To encourage the use of clothing collection bins, SMART has drafted a legislative language template that state and local governments can use to draft their own clothing collection bin ordinances and laws. SMART believes its legislative template applies reasonable requirements to clothing collection bin operators, while maintaining a free-and-fair marketplace where both for-profit companies and non-profit organizations can coexist and encourage the recycling of all clothing and household textiles.

SMART has also developed position papers that clearly state the requirements that SMART believes leads to positive use of clothing collection bins. These requirements, as identified in the Association’s Code of Conduct, are designed to bring transparency of business practices to the clothing collection bin industry, to encourage the use of clothing collection bins by the public, and to educate lawmakers and the public about the importance of clothing and textile recycling.

The second hand clothing industry is lauded by many, including Oxfam, an international aid organization. Oxfam points out, it “supports the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of people in developing countries who work in trading, distribution, repairing, restyling, washing, etc.”

It is estimated that only 15.3%¹ of clothing and textiles¹ are being diverted from the waste stream for recycling purposes. More can and must be done to recapture these vital resources.

Combined with the charitable industry, SMART’s membership companies prevent more than 4 billion pounds¹ of post-consumer textile waste from hitting the solid waste stream each year.

International trade is a critical component of the textile industry’s success. More than 60% of recovered textile waste is sent abroad to more than 100 countries, equating to more than 1.4 billion pounds of used clothing – creating hundreds of thousands of jobs worldwide.

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The recycling process of SMART companies rely largely on human labor and are far less energy/water/resource-intensive or polluting than other recycle industries.

¹ Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Municipal Solid Waste characterization report summary document 2011 (Table 1, Page 7).

*Textiles – items made from woven and non-woven cloth (such as wool and cotton fibers), vinyl and other artificial fabrics, also to include items made from fur or other animal skins.

**Secondary Materials – manufactured materials that have already been used at least once and are to be used again after recycling.

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SMART FAQs

Besides individual consumers, can businesses help recycle textiles?

Yes! Businesses are a very important recycling base and should be encouraged to do so. SMART member companies already work with the following industries and are sensitive to their special needs:

- Healthcare facilities
- Hotels and other hospitality facilities
- Textile and paper mills and manufacturers
- Cut and sew plants
- Textile dye facilities
- Retail stores (returned/obsolete merchandise) and commercial laundries
- Select government agencies and institutions

Does the used clothing market undermine new clothing businesses in developing countries?

No! According to SMART members, used clothing sales create jobs and affordable apparel in many lesser developed countries. Many people in these countries cannot afford locally made, new clothing. Many people in these countries earn their livelihood by selling used clothing. New clothing businesses in developing countries can make more money producing clothing for export to wealthier countries in Europe and North America than selling them locally.

How can local governments best manage the placement of clothing collection bins within their communities?

The more convenient a recycling option is to the public, the more likely it is to be utilized. To date, only a few municipalities have implemented curbside collection programs for clothing and other household textiles. The next most convenient option in the industry is clothing collection bins.

SMART has developed draft legislative language town and county councils can use to write their own ordinances to establish the requirements for placing clothing collection bins. To promote transparency within the clothing and textile recycling industry, SMART's recommended legislative language requires the printing on the clothing bin be clear and easy-to-read. The information on the collection bin should clearly state the nature of the business/organization placing the clothing collection bin (for-profit/non-profit) as well as provide accurate contact information for the company. Additionally, the recommended legislative language requires the company placing the bin to pay all permit fees, to make regular collections from the bin, to respond in a reasonable amount of time to complaints, and, to obtain permission prior to placing a bin.

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Municipalities that manage their own landfills should know that 5-to-7%¹ of all materials within the landfill are clothing and/or textiles that could have been recycled. To extend the life of their solid waste facilities, municipalities should encourage the recycling of clothing, just as they do paper, plastic, glass and aluminum cans.

Are reclaimed wipers (recycled rags) the better, "greener" choice?

Yes! Worldwide, there is a big push for companies to promote "green" products. Many people are surprised to learn that reclaimed wipers are actually better for the environment than laundered shop towels because they decrease our global carbon footprint. A few facts:

- 17 gallons of water and 66 BTUs of energy are used to create one cotton shop towel where no water or energy is used when creating a reclaimed wiper (recycled rag);
- Contaminants found in laundry waste water for cotton shop towels contain lead, toluene, xylene, zinc and other heavy metals. The EPA estimates that five million pounds of untreated contaminants per year flow into our waterways from laundered shop towels;
- Most recycled wiper products are manufactured from recycled textiles that have been diverted from landfills;
- Cotton, used to make shop towels, is the most pesticide-dependent crop in the world. In fact, most cotton shop towels are manufactured outside of North America from virgin cotton fibers;
- When manufacturing cotton towels, dyeing requires a hefty amount of water and its fixatives often flow into rivers and sewers. Using recycled textiles promotes clean water and conservation.

SMART encourages local jurisdictions that are seeking to expand their "green" sustainable programs to require the use of reclaimed wipers within their facilities. Local jurisdictions which operate clothing and textile recycling programs can "close the loop" by incorporating reclaimed wipers into their purchasing practices.

What is the environmental impact of clothing and textile recycling?

The United States Environmental Protection Agency reports current clothing and textile recycling has a greater impact on reducing greenhouse gases than the recycling of yard waste, glass, and plastic.

According to the EPA, 2 million tons of textiles are currently recycled annually. This is the equivalent of removing 1 million cars from America's highways. This is more than 5-times the impact of recycled yard trimmings (170 thousand cars removed); is more than 4-times the impact of glass recycling (210 thousand cars removed); more than plastic recycling (640 thousand cars removed); and is nearly equal to the impact of aluminum recycling (1.3 million cars removed).⁴

Are reclaimed wipers safer for workers and companies?

Yes! Laundered cotton shop towels routinely contain dangerous levels of lead, cadmium, antimony, solvents and oil; reclaimed* wipers require no washing like laundered rags, which expose workers while using excess water and energy to clean. Reclaimed wipers contain no residual solvents, foreign objects or embedded contaminants such as metal shavings that can injure workers and damage equipment.

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* **Reclaimed** – to recover (substances) in a pure or usable form from refuse, discarded articles, etc.

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Report: Municipal Solid Waste in the United States (2011)

⁴Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Municipal Solid Waste characterization report summary document (Table 5, Page 12).

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SMART leadership

Eric Stubin, SMART President

Trans-Americas Trading Company | 50 Carol Street, Clifton, NJ 07014 estubin@tranclo.com
Tel: 973-778-4611

Eric Stubin is the President of SMART. Eric has been active in SMART leadership for the previous 5 years and was instrumental in helping SMART to focus its efforts on its green initiatives and strategic goals since 2010. In addition, Eric has focused his energy reaching out to other stakeholders interested in keeping what we wear out of our landfills. His efforts have led him to assist in the reinvigoration of the Council for Textile Recycling (CTR) in 2011 and serves as its current Chairman. In addition, Eric has been President of the Shippers of Recycled Textiles (SORT) for the last 6 years and most recently he helped to organize and emcee the first ever International Textile Recycling Summit (ITRS) in June 2014, an event co-sponsored by SMART, CTR and the Bureau of International Recycling Textiles Division. Eric Stubin is the Principal and CEO, of Trans-Americas Trading Company. His company collects, recycles and exports some 16 million pounds of used clothing and footwear annually in their Clifton, New Jersey facility. He has been involved in the secondhand clothing industry for twenty years.

David Bloovman, SMART Vice President

Fibematics Inc. | 3313 West Stokley St. Philadelphia, PA 19140 davidb@fibemat.com Tel: 973-778-4611

David Bloovman is Vice President of SMART and Fibematics Inc., a Philadelphia based company serving the wiping cloth industry since 1968 with a focus on nonwoven wiping materials and products. He's worked at Fibematics since 2002, working closely with accounts in 10+ countries as well as material processors and wiping product distributors throughout the USA. Fibematics works with some of the largest nonwoven mills in the USA to create safe havens for their secondary materials and waste in addition to converting private label first quality wiping products in Philadelphia, PA and in Southern California. David has been on the SMART Board of Directors since 2011, has been Chairman of SMART's Programs Committee, and has been active with SMART's Membership Committee. He also serves on the Board of Directors of Grow Philly, a Philadelphia based non-profit building healthy, sustainable communities in Philadelphia.

Jackie King, SMART Executive Director

SMART | 3465 Box Hill Corporate Center Drive, Suite H, Abingdon, MD 21009 jackie@kingmgmt.org
Tel: 443.640.1050 x 105 Fax: 443.640.1086

Jackie King serves as SMART's Executive Director and acts as the chief staff liaison to the SMART board of directors. She is responsible for the administration and implementation of SMART board policies and initiatives. Ms. King has worked in association management for more than ten years, encompassing advancing roles in project and program management, strategic planning and implementation, administrative management, budgeting and financial management, meeting and event management, and communications on behalf of client organization.



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SMARTinfo@kingmgmt.org

www.SMARTasn.org



The Association of Wiping Materials, Used Clothing and Fiber Industries