



SMART textile recycling checklist for communities

Secondary Materials And Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) is committed to helping federal, state and local government agencies reduce the amount of textiles going into landfills. Currently, only 15% of used clothing and textiles are being recycled. The other 85% goes straight to our landfills and the majority of people don't know they can recycle those unused textiles and help reduce the negative environmental impact. These SMART recommendations and suggestions can help governments educate the public, increase textile recycling and possibly generate revenue. SMART's mission is to offer help and expertise to all jurisdictions in developing programs most suitable for their particular regions.

Educate The Recycling Public

- Most consumers are unaware of just how much clothing and textiles they can actually donate and recycle. An education and marketing program budgeted several times a year can increase recycling and reduce the waste stream to landfills. School programs would help to get students thinking early about textile recycling the same way we all think of recycling paper, bottles and cans. Textile recycling information should be included in all current public relations and promotions efforts now supporting recycling programs.
- All clean and dry clothing can be donated and recycled. All used clothing, even pieces with stains or missing buttons, can be re-used and repurposed. Besides the usual shirts, pants and suits donations, don't forget hats, gloves, socks, underwear, belts, ties, purses, handbags, of any style, age or condition. The average person throws away 10 lbs. of used clothing every year.
- 95% of consumer textiles can be recycled to be re-worn or re-used. Wearable items are either sold or distributed by charities. A portion of donations go to developing countries where there is increasingly high demand. Un-wearable items are cut into wiping cloths and rags or ground up into fiber to manufacture stuffing, insulation and carpet underlayment.
- There's no need to question out-of-style or worn clothing; no charity will ever make donors return to pick up clothing that can't be sold in thrift stores.
- Footwear is recyclable! Shoes, sandals, sneakers, cleats, boots, flip-flops, slippers all can be re-used or repaired. Even shoes with worn heels, uppers or in need of a good shoe shine are highly recyclable.
- Household textiles like curtains, drapes, comforters, sheets, pillow cases, towels, tablecloths and linens are all recyclable.

donate recycle don't throw away



Create Convenient Collection Points

- The more convenient the recycling process is the more successful the program will be. Clothing and textile collection boxes should be allowed on public property such as parks, playgrounds, school parking lots, government buildings and any place people frequent for shopping, work or play.
- Create and promote clothing/textile recycling days similar to current programs to collect chemicals, paint, electronics and pharmaceuticals.
- Partner with local and national charities that collect clothing and other household textiles to increase the public awareness and increase the amount of front-door and curb-side pickups. Provide and distribute branded water-tight plastic bags to facilitate and expedite the collection process. Post this information on agency websites and social media as well as provide an 800 number to help consumers contact participating charities and locate donation boxes.
- Get things started by selecting a small geographic area or several trial communities to begin new ways of increasing awareness and recycling. Right now, San Francisco and New York are setting a goal of zero textiles in their landfills.

Textile Recycling Means Money

- Depending on market conditions and costs associated with collection, municipalities can create a revenue stream as well as reduce cost associated with waste collection and disposal.
- Schools, PTA's, athletic teams, marching bands and other community organizations can work with local jurisdictions to collect clothing as part of a fundraiser.

Legislate Responsible Recycling

- Restrict the disposal of clothing and household textiles similar to current bans on lawn, leaf and landscaping debris. Some European countries are already doing this with great success.
- Consider rules and regulations for clothing retailers that require them to collect used garments in a redemption program similar to bottle and can redemption at beverage retailers. This is being done in Germany.
- Add a 2-3 cent sales tax on new clothing and textiles to help defray the cost of recycling education, collections and processing. This is now working in France.
- Insist public agencies such as the Department of Public Works and Schools use wipers made from recycled textiles rather than rented, laundered shop wipers. A Lockheed Martin Study shows that recycled wipers have a much less negative impact on the environment than newly manufactured, laundered wipers.

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