



Preserving Resources,  
Preventing Waste

# The New Jersey WasteWise Bulletin

Newsletter of the New Jersey WasteWise Business Network – Winter 2020  
WasteWise ... improving your bottom line and the environment  
through waste reduction, recycling and recycled product procurement.

## Solar Panel Recycling Legislation Enacted

New Jersey is home to many solar panels. In fact, New Jersey is ranked 7th in the United States for total installed solar photovoltaic capacity. While this is something to be proud of, many of the solar panels in use are approaching the end of their useful life.

To address this issue, the New Jersey Legislature crafted a bill which calls for the creation of a solar panel recycling commission that will investigate options for recycling and other end-of-life management methods for photovoltaic and other solar energy generation structures. The legislation was signed into law by Governor Phil Murphy in August 2019.

The New Jersey Solar Panel Recycling Commission will consist of nine members, including individuals from government, the business sector/recycling industry, the solar panel industry, non-profit recycling organizations and academia. The commission is required to submit its findings and recommendations for legislative, administrative or private sector action in a final report to the Governor and Legislature within one year.

## Recycling Rates Update

The United States Environmental Protection Agency recently announced a slight increase in the national recycling rate from 34.6 percent in 2015 to 35.2 percent in 2017. During this same period, the amount of material composted in the United States increased from 23.4 million tons to 27 million tons. Yard waste accounted for the vast majority of this composting tonnage.

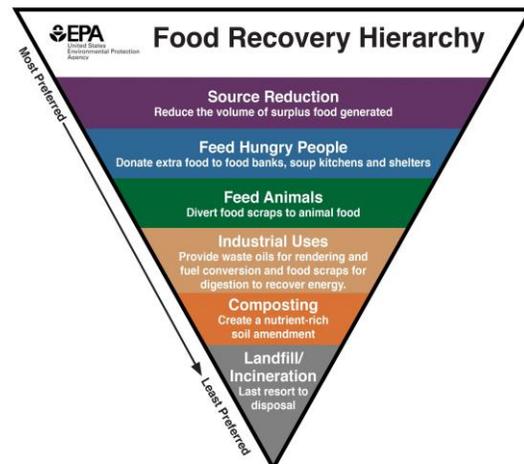
In New Jersey, recycling statistics for 2017 show that the Garden State achieved a 40 percent recycling rate for the municipal solid waste stream (residential, commercial and institutional) and a 60 percent recycling rate for the total solid waste stream. While these rates are down slightly from 2016, the decline is attributed to the continual lightweighting of plastic packaging and further shifts from glass packaging to plastic.

In plastic recycling news, over 1.8 billion pounds of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles were collected for recycling in the United States in 2018, which represents a five percent increase over the previous year. Despite this increase, the recycling rate for PET bottles remained at 29 percent due to an increase in the generation of these bottles.

## Food Waste News Flash

Discover how to help your K-12 school or college reduce, recycle and recover food waste at <https://www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/sfwg/>.

Learn about the Food Recovery Hierarchy at <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-hierarchy>



## Did You Know...

- Munch Bowls are edible, vegan, wheat-based bowls that are an eco-friendly alternative to plastic food containers. Munch bowls can hold hot soup for up to five hours and maintain a shelf life of 15 months. For more information, visit <http://www.munchbowls.co.za/index>.
- The Unocup is a spill-resistant, foldable coffee cup made of paper that holds hot liquids without the use of a conventional plastic lid. The cup folds into a peak, which becomes an integrated lid, thereby reducing the amount of plastic in the waste stream. For further details, visit <https://www.unocup.com/>.
- Middletown recently became the first municipality in New Jersey to purchase a polystyrene (commonly referred to as Styrofoam™) recycling machine, which processes the material into a marketable form that is used by manufacturers to make recycled content picture frames and other consumer products.
- Fishing spots throughout the Union County parks system are now equipped with specially designed recycling bins for used monofilament fishing line. The "Reel in and Recycle" program will hopefully keep used fishing line out of county waterways. The collected fishing line will be sent to an organization that recycles the material into raw plastic pellets, which can be used to make a variety of new plastic products.
- Used conveyor belts, plastic pipes, gymnasium flooring, steel drums, fire hoses, retail shelving, lighting fixtures and many other industrial items are accepted by repurposedMATERIALS, located in Philadelphia and then "repurposed" and sold for new uses. For additional information, visit <https://www.repurposedmaterialsinc.com/index.php?p=home>.
- Nationally, 9.4 percent of plastic bags, sacks and wraps were recycled in 2017.
- The amount of covered electronic devices recycled in New Jersey has grown from 46.2 million pounds in 2011 to 68.6 million pounds in 2018. This represents a 48 percent increase.
- Ford Motor Company is taking coffee roasting waste from McDonald's and transforming it into bioplastic that is then used to make new auto parts.

## Easy-to-Implement Office Reuse Programs

Over time, businesses and other organizations accumulate and store a wide variety of office supplies, furnishings, books and other items that are no longer needed. Instead of throwing these unwanted items in the trash, start a reuse program. The following are examples of easy-to-implement office reuse programs:

- Set up a popup bookstore in your office. Many offices have unneeded dictionaries and books taking up space, many of which may be of interest to staff, libraries or charitable organizations.
- Set up a drop-off area in your office for unwanted office supplies. Unwanted white boards, file folders, staplers, office trash cans, binders and more can be collected and made available to staff, schools and charitable organizations.
- Office redesign and renovation often results in unwanted desks and office furniture. Offer these items to staff, schools and charitable groups.
- Hold a "free market" event at your location where staff can donate unwanted items from their office or home and/or pick up items that they would like for free.

## Robots and Recycling

Artificial intelligence-assisted robotic technology is now being used at recycling centers to sort materials and improve quality control. Guided by cameras and computer systems trained to recognize specific objects, the robots' arms glide over moving conveyor belts until they reach their target. Oversized fingers with sensors that are attached to the arms grab cans, glass, plastic containers, and other recyclable items and place them into nearby bins.



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