

Subject: Why Recycle?

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Why recycle? I receive confessions from non-recyclers quite often. I find it interesting the responses I get when I introduce myself. I don't introduce myself as, "Carey, do you recycle?" or "Hi, I'm Carey, the Recycling Police." Instead I start out with, "I am Carey. I work for the Recycling Center." I hear responses such as "I don't recycle, it's too hard to teach my kids." "I don't recycle. I live out in the country." "I don't recycle, they (the waste haulers) just throw it away." "I don't recycle; it's not really efficient like they say it is." I hear them all. So I want to challenge those thoughts. Let's talk about why and how to recycle.

Let's start with the first one. We need to recycle for our kids. Not only will our children be dealing with our landfills, they will also be searching for the resources we are using and discarding today. The more we throw away the less our children have, so recycle. It's easy to learn and easy to teach, teach by example. Often the problem is convenience. Make recycling convenient in your home by placing a small box or bag next to the computer to collect paper; a new trash can to collect glass, plastic, and cans under the sink; place an extra basket by your reading chair for yesterday's newspaper; call the Recycling Hotline for more ideas to bring recycling into your home (989)773-9631.

As far as living in the country it definitely has its benefits, but it makes recycling, just like trash disposal, a bit more challenging. To ease the burden there are recycling depots set up around the county that are open on specific Saturdays. To find the location near you call the Recycling Hotline.

The Isabella County Recycling Program is working with many townships in Isabella County to establish curbside recycling to make recycling, even out in the country, as easy as possible. You may be asking about efficiency for picking this recycling up, it does make sense. The recycling that you generate will outweigh the energy required to pick it up from your house. Our County Recycling Program is a great one, and we want to enjoy it to the fullest.

I have heard the story of a truck coming along to pick-up recycling being a trash truck, soooo many times. The confusion is your waste hauler has a specific truck to pick up recycling. It looks very similar to the garbage truck. It is all brought back to the recycling center in Mt. Pleasant. Let me explain why it wouldn't be thrown away....**economics**. It costs more money to dispose of material in the landfill than to recycle it. At the recycling center we process, bail, ship, and sell the material you send to us. It wouldn't be very lucrative for us to dispose of something we sell. Speaking of selling, the more recycling you do, the more money the county makes, the less tax you need to pay. It is a win-win situation.

Now for the efficiency information, this is the question most often presented, is it really more efficient to recycle, including picking it up, hauling it somewhere, and dropping it off to be turned into new

material, than just to get the new material? It is MUCH, MUCH, MUCH more efficient. When producing something from raw materials, the raw material must be mined (major energy), shipped to a refinery, refined, processed, shipped to a manufacturer, and made into new material. Recycling that same amount of material is pretty simple, instead of the mining and refining steps, we take it from your trash, process it, ship it to a manufacturer, and make it into new products. We cut out steps. Plus we can recycle material over, and over again. Just one piece of paper can be recycled six times. Imagine the logging that would be saved from all of Isabella County's Recycling. Just this year, 7 months, January - July, we have recycled 224 tons of office paper. This has saved Isabella County 2,016 barrels of oil or 85,120 gallons, just in office paper. Now let's talk about our plastics which are made from oil. In Isabella County we have recycled 87 tons of plastic. This saves us 1,418 barrels of oil or 59,595 gallons of oil. I will stop with the numbers there. If you want more information call the Recycling Hotline (989)773-9631. So, yes, it is much more efficient to utilize our recycling program than to throw it all away.

No excuses, it makes sense, recycle today for a better tomorrow. I can give you all the reasons, the tools with which to start, but I cannot throw the plastic bottle into the recycling for you. For us, our children, our grandchildren, stretch it out, make it last longer, reduce, reuse, and recycle. For more information please call the Recycling Hotline (989)773-9631 or email cschalm@isabellacounty.org.