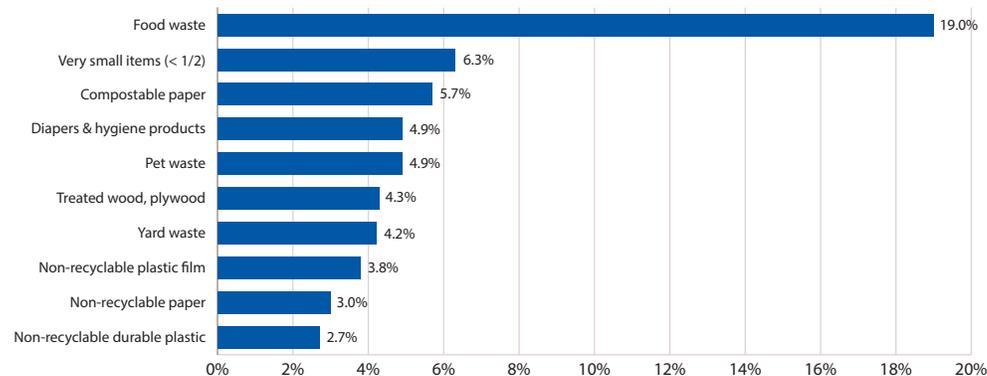


Increasing recycling and reducing waste: what can you do?

Waste sort study provides insights

Hennepin County conducted a waste study in May 2016 to figure out what is in our trash and identify the best opportunities to reduce waste and increase recycling. The study found that there are some easy things everyone can do to reduce their trash.

Top 10 most common materials found in the trash



Recycle organic waste



Recycling organic materials, which include food and compostable paper, is the biggest opportunity to reduce our trash. Organics make up about one-quarter of our trash, and not many people are participating in organics recycling programs yet.

Check with your city or hauler to see if they offer curbside pick-up or drop-off options for organics recycling. If they do, sign up and participate! You'll start making a big difference in reducing your trash right away. If organics recycling service isn't available, ask for it. Learn more at hennepin.us/residents/recycling-hazardous-waste/organics-recycling.

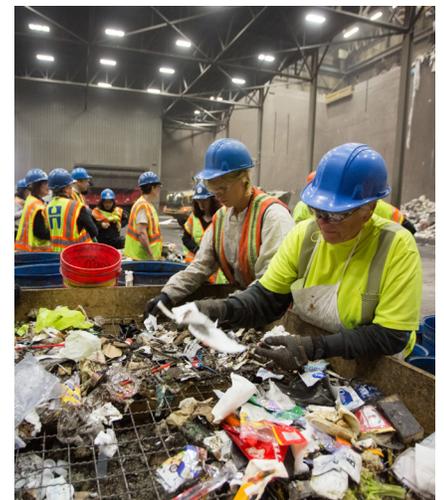
Prevent food waste

Food waste is the most prevalent material in the trash by far, representing 19 percent of the trash by weight. Steps you can take to reduce food waste include using up all of the food that you buy, practicing meal planning, understanding the date labels on food, and properly storing your food. Learn more at savethefood.com.

About the study

The study focused on residential trash from the City of Minneapolis. Trash was collected from three different neighborhoods and sorted in two ways:

- First, the trash was sorted into 55 different categories. This provided extensive detail on what's in the trash. Categories that the trash was sorted into include recyclables, organics, construction and demolition debris, and textiles.
- Secondly, the trash was sorted further to identify where it would be found in a retail store. Retail categories included grocery, health and beauty, home décor, toys and more. Some of the trash was also sorted by material sub-type, such as different types of plastic film. This second sort provided an additional layer of data and insights.



Recycle more paper and cardboard



Overall, we're doing a pretty good job with recycling, but there are opportunities to improve. The study found that we could be recycling more paper and cardboard. Remember that mail, office and school papers, magazine

and catalogs, newspapers, cardboard boxes, cereal and cracker boxes, shoe boxes, and boxes from toiletries are all recyclable. Get a complete list of what's accepted for recycling at hennepin.us/recycling.

Use drop-off options for materials that cannot be recycled at home

There are several options to recycle materials that are not accepted in curbside recycling programs. Find options at hennepin.us/greendisposalguide.



Clothing can be brought to donation centers for reuse and recycling.



Plastic bags and film can be recycled at many grocery and retail stores



There are drop-off options to recycle electronics, mattresses and scrap metal.

Prevent waste

Although there's plenty we can do to recycle more, the study found that there's still a lot of trash in the trash. Several materials in the top 10 list of items in the trash don't have good reuse or recycling markets. This includes diapers, pet waste, non-recyclable plastic and paper, home improvement waste, and small items (those that are less than half an inch in size).

Reducing the amount of waste generated in the first place is the most impactful waste management practice, and there are many things we can do to prevent waste. As consumers, we all play a role in how the goods and services we buy impact the environment. We can collectively have an impact by considering what we are buying, making purchases that support the environment, and providing feedback to businesses about the importance of sustainability.

Simple ways to reduce waste include:

- Avoid single-use, disposable items and use reusables instead
- Choose products with less packaging
- Remove yourself from unwanted mail lists
- Sell or donate stuff you no longer want
- Buy used items
- Purchase goods that are of high quality and built to last
- Maintain and repair products
- Borrow, rent, or share instead of buying your own

Manage the trash left in an environmentally preferable way

There are two options for managing the trash that remains: burning it to generate energy or burying it in a landfill. Hennepin County sends trash to waste-to-energy facilities to generate energy and minimize the amount of waste sent to landfills.

Waste-to-energy is environmentally preferable to landfilling because it has better air pollution controls, fewer air emissions, generates more energy, produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and provides the opportunity to recover metal from the trash for recycling.

Learn more

Learn more about waste management in the county and what you can do at hennepin.us/solidwasteplanning.

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