

What happens to my recyclables?

Provided by your Recycling Block Captain, Fall 2016.
More guides at <http://tiny.cc/wpatcapt>.

Where do they go?

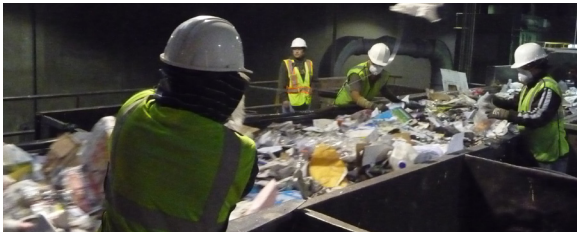
Have you ever wondered what happens to your cardboard, paper, cans, and bottles after they're picked up at the curb? Where does Republic Services take them – and do they really end up being made into new products? Here's your chance to find out!

From Corvallis, Republic Services transports truckloads of recyclable items to the Pioneer Recycling Services MRF in Clackamas, Oregon.

What is a MRF?

A Materials Recovery Facility, or MRF (pronounced "murf"), is a specialized plant that receives, separates, and prepares recyclable materials to be marketed to manufacturers. The MRF includes an unloading area and a series of large conveyor belts, where material is sorted by both humans and machines. Sorting is critical, since our cardboard, paper, cans, and plastic containers are commingled (i.e., mixed together) when they're picked up.

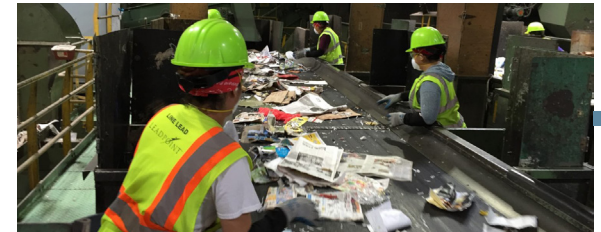
How Are Materials Sorted?



Step 1: Pre-sort – Before the recyclable materials enter the automated processing equipment, employees pull out trash, metal, plastic film (e.g., plastic bags, shrink wrap, etc.) and other contaminants from the conveyor belt.



Step 2: Cardboard screen – A huge screen separates large cardboard pieces from paper and smaller items like metal and plastic containers, which fall through the screen to other conveyors.



Step 3: Paper screen & sort – Another screen separates heavier items like plastic and metal, which fall through to other conveyors. Since it's lighter, paper stays on top and moves to a separate belt, where sorters remove any non-paper items.



Step 4: Container line – Containers that were separated from paper enter a line where employees separate plastics by hand (based on shape) and a magnet and eddy current remove metal containers.



Step 5: "Fine" screens – All of the "fines" (materials smaller than 2") that were separated during Steps 2 and 3 are sent through a vacuum system and sorted into three grades: heavy fines (glass, lids, rocks, etc.), shredded paper, and light fines (dust, dirt, etc.).

Final Step – After sorting, the separated materials are bundled and shipped off to buyers of raw materials.

See a short video of the whole process at <http://tiny.cc/mrf-video>

Why is Contamination an Issue?

It is vital that we all include only materials that are clean and accepted by Republic Services in our commingle carts. MRF workers have little time to remove non-recyclable items (a.k.a. contamination) because the lines move so quickly. When we include these items, they soil other recyclables (possibly making them unrecyclable), damage equipment, harm workers who sort our material for us, and/or lower the quality of what's being sold for recycling (making recycling more costly).

Top Tips for Recycling Right

1. Remove all screw-top lids and don't include items 2" or smaller.
2. Flatten cardboard.
3. Place materials loose in your cart - never use plastic bags.
4. Include plastic bottles, jars, jugs and tubs and no other plastics! MRF employees who sort plastics look for the shape of the container, not the number.

