



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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Environmental Services declares 2015 to be the year of the carton

Rinse them out when empty and they can be used as bird feeders or to build anything from gingerbread houses to snow forts. Food and beverage cartons can be re-used in many creative ways. They also can – and should – be recycled.

St. Louis County Environmental Services began accepting cartons for recycling in the fall of 2013. In 2014, 108 cubic yards of cartons were recycled.

“We’re happy with the results we saw in our first full year of recycling cartons, but we know we could do better,” said Mary McReynolds, a planner in the Environmental Services Department. “We estimate that a little more than one percent of our waste stream is cartons. If we could recycle them instead, we’d not only save space in the landfill, but we’d also conserve the equivalent of the annual energy used by 90 homes.”

Hospitals, schools and other institutions that offer food service can see a huge reduction in their trash, and consequently their waste bill, by recycling cartons. For example, a school with 500 students goes through nearly 420 trash bags of cartons in a year.

As a way to call attention to the opportunity for carton recycling, the department is calling 2015 the Year of the Carton, and will continue to work to educate people about re-use ideas for cartons as well provide reminders to recycle them.

Examples of cartons that should be recycled include milk, broth, cream and egg substitute cartons, juice boxes and other similar containers. Cartons are made primarily of high quality paper that can be recycled into office paper, tissues or building materials. There are two types of cartons – both of which are recyclable. Aseptic or ‘shelf-stable’ containers are typically rectangular and can be found on the shelves in grocery stores. Gabled cartons are found in the chilled section in grocery stores. They’re also the milk cartons served widely at school cafeterias.

To recycle cartons, residents within the St. Louis County Solid Waste Management Area, which is all of St. Louis County outside of the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, should rinse and flatten the cartons and remove any caps or straws. Cartons should be recycled along with #1 and #2 plastic containers and metal cans whether you are using curbside collection or a county drop off site. Residents in Duluth and surrounding townships served by WLSSD should contact their waste hauler for information on recycling cartons.

To learn more about recycling efforts in St. Louis County, visit stlouiscountymn.gov/recycle or call (218) 749-9703 or (800) 450-9278.

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