



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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St. Louis County Environmental Services offers Earth Day recycling reminders

Every day is Earth Day for the St. Louis County Environmental Services Department, which focuses on protecting, sustaining and improving our region's environment through solid waste management and on-site wastewater services. In recognition of the official Earth Day, which is April 22, 2013, Environmental Services offers this helpful information about recycling.

Recycling matters! It saves resources and energy that would have been needed to create new materials. Some examples:

- Every ton of paper (approximately 12 cubic yards) made from recycled materials saves approximately 7,000 gallons of water, 380 gallons of oil and 4,000 kilowatts of energy.
- Five 2-liter recycled beverage bottles make enough fiberfill to make a ski jacket.
- Recycled metal cans and other metals are a necessary component of making new steel. In fact, the process requires a minimum of 25 percent recycled material.
- When a used aluminum can is recycled, it can be back on a store shelf within 60 days, and can be recycled again and again.

In St. Louis County, more than 5,500 tons of plastic, aluminum, glass, cardboard, paper and metal recyclable materials are collected through the County's drop-off, curbside and school recycling programs. These materials are sorted at the St. Louis County Recycling Processing Facility in Virginia. Opened in 2000, the facility saves the County more than 14,500 cubic yards of landfill space annually.

To make recycling convenient for residents, the County drop-off recycling program provides 46 locations for residents to bring their recyclables. Hours vary depending on location. Types and numbers of drop-off containers vary by the amount of recyclables collected at the site. High volume

sites have individual bins for the different materials, blue for papers or cans and bottles, green for glass, or brown for cardboard. Lower volume sites may have bins that are divided into more than one compartment to collect several types of recyclables in the same container. Approximately 56 percent of recyclables processed at the County recycling facility are collected through the drop-off program.

Curbside recycling programs in St. Louis County collect the same materials as the roll-off program. Collected materials are hauled directly to the recycling facility for processing or to a transfer station for consolidation before transport to the facility. Curbside recycling is available in Virginia, Mt. Iron and Eveleth through municipal collections that participate in the County's recycling program. Hibbing provides a staffed recyclables drop-off site. Residential curbside collection is available in Hibbing through a subscription service with a private contractor, while commercial recycling collection is managed by the Hibbing Sanitation Department. Chisholm contracts with Waste Management, Inc., for curbside recycling collection and processing.

Environmental Services partners with Iron Range Youth in Action (IRYA) for recycling programs in area schools. A County grant helped the schools purchase collection containers, totes and carts. The six participating school districts each have a program specific to meet their needs, designed by IRYA students, school staff and faculty. The primary recyclable material in schools is paper, which accounts for about one third of all school waste. By recycling papers, cardboard and food and beverage containers, area schools can reduce their garbage disposal costs significantly and provide a leadership role in encouraging area residents to recycle more.

The County is expanding its efforts in the area of event recycling. Groups hosting an event are encouraged to recycle and reduce waste. Several community events now borrow collection containers from Environmental Services to keep cans and bottles out of the garbage.

“We sometimes hear people say they don't recycle because they think it's just going to end up in a landfill. Nothing could be further from the truth,” said Ted Troolin, director of St. Louis County Environmental Services. “Keeping materials out of the landfill saves County residents and businesses a significant amount in garbage disposal fees in addition to extending the life of our Regional Landfill, and it helps turn waste material back into useful products.”

Among the items that should be recycled in St. Louis County are plastic (labeled #1 or #2) and glass bottles and containers with lids removed; aluminum, tin and metal food and beverage cans; and mixed paper, including newspaper, magazines, catalogs, phone books and junk mail. Cardboard can also be recycled in curbside programs and at select drop-off locations.

Cans and bottles should be rinsed and flattened, if possible. Residents with curbside recycling should place items for pickup no more than a day ahead of schedule to minimize the chances of it tipping over, blowing away or attracting the interest of animals. Residents bringing recyclables to a County drop-off site should sort items into categories using paper bags or boxes for

hauling, then place them in the proper recycling bin.

The task of hauling, sorting and marketing recyclables collected in the County recycling programs falls on the shoulders of Northern Minnesota Recycling (NMR), a locally-owned company that has been under contract with the County for the operation of the recycling facility since it opened. NMR employs approximately 14 people for sorting, facility operations and recycling drop-off container haulage. The sorting begins when recyclables are brought to the Recycling Facility and are dumped on the tipping floor. Any obvious non-recyclables are removed by NMR employees. Recycled items are then loaded onto a conveyor belt which feeds them onto a sort line where they are hand-separated by material type and tossed into large bins. Once recycled materials are sorted, they are baled and shipped for reuse to end markets.

Cardboard collected in St. Louis County is sent to Rock-Tenn in St. Paul to make new cardboard. Mixed paper is sent to USG in Cloquet where it is used to make ceiling tile. Plastic is sent to MasterMark in St. Cloud for use in plastic lumber. Aluminum and metal cans are sent to various brokers and brewers. Glass is crushed and screened and used as “Glass 5” aggregate for roads, parking lots and drainage medium at the Regional Landfill.

Environmental Services is working to expand the list of acceptable recycled materials. Due to the variability in markets for collected materials and the cost to truck materials, the County has been conservative about adding materials to its program, doing so only after new markets exhibit stability and sustainability.

In addition to recycling programs, the Department manages five solid waste transfer stations and 18 smaller canister sites that collect garbage throughout the County to haul to the Regional Landfill for disposal. The solid waste locations also provide residents with convenient opportunities to drop off scrap metals, tires, appliances, televisions and computers, among other waste items that should not be landfilled. Many of these items are accepted free of charge.

Environmental Services also operates two residential household hazardous waste collection facilities – one at the Regional Landfill in Virginia and the other at the Hibbing Transfer Station. For hours of operation, please refer to the telephone number or website listed below.

The St. Louis County Environmental Services Department, formerly known as the Solid Waste Department, provides solid waste programs for over 89,000 residents and businesses in the St. Louis County Solid Waste Management Area, which includes all of St. Louis County except those cities and townships within the Western Lake Superior District. For more information about recycling and waste disposal opportunities in St. Louis County, or to request a tour of the Recycling Facility, call (218) 749-9703 or visit www.stlouiscountymn.gov/recycle.

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