

WHERE DOES ALL THIS STUFF GO?



1. Picking it up...

Fraser Elliott, recycling truck driver for BFI (Allied Waste), tosses a Geneva resident's recyclables into his truck. Each recycling truck services about 800 houses each day.

In this truck, all recyclables (paper and containers) are mixed together, a process known as "Single Stream". Some companies use trucks with two compartments, one for recyclables and one for garbage.



2. Transfer To The Sorting Plant...

When full, Fraser drove his truck to a plant in South Elgin where he dumped his load. The mixed recyclables were loaded into a large truck trailer and taken to Resource Management Company in Chicago Ridge (a south suburb).

Here, the trailer is emptying its load onto the floor at Resource Management. Most recyclables from Kane County go to either this sorting plant or a similar one in Grayslake.

3. Sorting it all out...



An end loader pushes the mixed recyclables onto four conveyors. The sorting plant uses sophisticated technology to separate paper from containers.

The mixed paper is then sorted into newspaper, cardboard, and mixed paper piles. The containers are separated into glass, aluminum, steel, and plastics piles.

This plant sorts about 1,350 tons (that's 2.7 million pounds!) of recyclables each day. The process is mostly automated – only a few workers do a final sort for quality.

Only 6 percent of the material delivered to this plant ends up in a landfill. The residue is mostly Styrofoam, plastic bags, and other items which can't be recycled.

4. Bales, Bales, Bales...



After everything is sorted, each recyclable item is compressed into large bales, for ease of handling and shipping. Each bale measures about 5' x 4' x 4'. A bale of newspaper weighs about 2,200 pounds. A bale of PET soft drink bottles weighs 1,100 pounds.

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5. Off to Market...

(These examples describe the destinations of the Geneva recyclables that we followed. Materials can also be shipped to many other companies)

Milk Jugs - Clear and colored (like laundry detergent) #2 HDPE bottles went to KW Plastics in Troy, Alabama. KW sorts and washes the bottles and turns them into pellets, which are sold to many companies to make new plastic products.

Aluminum Cans - were trucked to the Alcoa Company in Knoxville, Tennessee, where they are melted and formed into new aluminum cans.

Soda & Water Bottles
#1 PET bottles went to Mohawk Carpets in Rome, Georgia, where they are turned into new polyester carpeting.

"Tin" Cans - Actually made from steel, the baled cans were trucked to Inland Steel in Gary, Indiana. They are melted and made into a variety of new steel products – new cans, auto parts, bridges, etc.

Did You Know?

It takes about 3 days from the time they're picked up for your recyclables to be sorted and shipped off to factories around the world.

Glass Bottles & Jars - were crushed into a sand-like consistency and shipped to several Midwestern companies who use the recycled sand to make fiberglass. *(Other recycling companies sort glass bottles by color, and ship it back to glass factories to make new bottles and jars.)*

Newspapers - were loaded into rail boxcars and shipped to the Abitibi Consolidated Company in Ontario, Canada. Abitibi makes 100% recycled newsprint and sells some of its newsprint to the Chicago Tribune. *(So today's newspaper could be made from last week's paper).*

Cardboard - was loaded onto shipping containers and sent to companies in China. There, it is made into "linerboard", the outer layer of new cardboard boxes.

Mixed Paper - Old mail, magazines, and cereal boxes were trucked to the Rock-Tenn Company in Aurora, IL, where it is made into paperboard for book covers and bindings. Some mixed paper is also shipped to China to make paperboard and packing paper.

