

Aerosols and Recycling



Consumers want the products they buy and use to be effective, economical *and* environmentally sound. Products and product containers that conserve resources and reduce waste are fast becoming the popular choice.

Aerosols have been around for more than 50 years in America's kitchens, bathrooms, workshops, gardens and institutions. But how do they fit in with waste reduction and recycling?

Recycled Content and Recyclable

Given the public's concerns about solid waste disposal, the aerosol industry teamed with the steel industry to include empty aerosol cans in recycling programs around the country. More than 5,300 municipal locations nationwide include empty aerosols for recycling as part of their steel can mix in both household residential and curbside buy-back and drop-off programs.

Most aerosol cans are made of steel and can be recycled along with any other empty steel containers. Post-consumer steel cans—food, beverage, paint and aerosols—are in demand because steel furnaces require recycled steel to make new steel. Today's

steel aerosol cans contain an average of 25 percent recycled content.

According to the U.S. EPA, household waste (including aerosol cans) is excluded from the definition of hazardous waste under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) regulations. Thus, household aerosol cans collected and subsequently managed in municipal recycling programs are not subject to various hazardous waste management regulations and can be safely and effectively recycled with other steel cans. Many recyclers and community recycling officials are simply not aware that the U.S. EPA recommends that all aerosols—including pesticide containers—be recycled once they're used up and empty. Consumers can help by encouraging their communities to accept empty aerosol cans along with other metal containers. The Steel Recycling Institute (1-800-937-1226) can provide more information about recycling.

Proper Disposal

Aerosols, like all other household and personal care product containers, should be disposed of properly:

- Use up the entire product purchased. Remember: because aerosols are airtight and the contents will not spoil or evaporate, they can be used and stored over long periods of time.
- Recycling is the best way to dispose of an empty household aerosol container. The plastic cap can be removed before the container is recycled.
- Community curbside, drop-off or buy-back recycling programs should be encouraged to include empty aerosol containers, as they can be recycled along with other recyclables.
- If in the rare instance a full or nearly full aerosol can needs to be discarded for some reason, it can be disposed of through the normal solid waste collection systems and according to label directions.
- Also, in the rare instance an aerosol package does not work properly, return it to the store where it was purchased for an exchange.

