



Recycling Messaging

How to talk about contamination

Purpose of this document

This document identifies the top recycling contaminants in Oregon, and includes cut-and-paste language that local governments, haulers and others can use to create outreach materials. By focusing on the same items and using the same words and images, we hope to create a consistent, clear voice across the state. The top contaminants identified in this document include:

Top 5 *:

- Plastic bags and wrap
- Batteries
- Styrofoam
- Clothing
- Frozen food boxes

Additional items:

- Food residue and liquids
- Hoses, wires, chains and electric cords (i.e.tanglers)
- Cups and to-go containers
- Glass
- Padded and plastic shipping envelopes

How to use this document

This document includes messaging about each item that can be tailored for various outreach formats, such as postcards, websites, newsletters, etc. To see how DEQ has used this document, see our [Recycle Right web page](#) as an example. In addition to these descriptions, DEQ has created a quarterly social media toolkit and photo library to support the State's efforts to harmonize messaging. These resources are available on DEQ's online [communications resource library](#).

Need additional support?

For support accessing files, please contact DEQ's Communications Specialist Julie Miller at miller.julie@deq.state.or.us

If you are a local government working on your Contamination Reduction Education Plan (CREP), and have questions about how you can use this document as part of your plan, please contact your regional DEQ technical assistance staff:

- **Cathie Rhoades**, 503-378-5089, Serving: Benton, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties
- **Cathy Brown**, 541-687-7325, Serving: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, and Lane counties
- **Jay Mustard** 541-633-2029, Serving: Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco, and Wheeler counties
- **Lexi Meek**, 503-229-5790, Serving: Clackamas, Clatsop and Multnomah counties
- **Tom Lang**, 503-229-5478, Serving Columbia, Multnomah, Tillamook and Washington counties

*Items were selected during a stakeholder engagement process over several months that involved representation from DEQ, local governments and industry. This list will be reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis.

Top contaminants messaging

Updated August 2019

#	Name	Common examples	Paragraph	Optional call to action
1	Plastic bags and plastic wrap	Plastic bags, produce bags, plastic wrap (e.g., cling wrap, dry cleaner bags and the plastic packaging for toilet paper and paper towels).	Plastic bags and wrap are not recycled when you put them in your curbside bin, and they can also cause other recyclable materials to get thrown out. Plastic bags and plastic wrap get wound up in the machinery at the recycling center and can cause severe, expensive damage. The best place to put them is in the garbage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring reusable bags when shopping, and keep them in a place where they'll get used, like your car or your kitchen. • You can help reduce waste by reusing plastic bags you already have. If you reuse them even once, you'll end up using half as many. • When possible, buy items with little or no plastic packaging and buy bulk foods.
2	Batteries	All batteries—rechargeable and single-use, batteries in electronics and musical greeting cards.	Batteries can cause fires, burns, and other environmental damage when not disposed of properly. Take them to a hazardous waste facility, a collection event or call 1-800-732-9253 to find other disposal options. Never place batteries in the recycling bin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy rechargeable batteries or consider alternatives to battery-operated products. • If you want to learn about battery recycling programs, visit Call2Recycle®.
3	Clothing, textiles, and fabric	Clothing and curtains	Clothing does not belong in your recycling bin, and will be thrown away if it arrives at a recycling facility. Textiles are commonly made by combining many different materials, which makes them challenging to separate and recycle. The best place to take clothing that is still wearable is a donation center, such as a thrift store. If it's no longer usable, the best place is in the garbage (or check your local thrift store for recycling options).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose quality clothes that save money, last longer and reduce waste. Poorly made clothes wear out quickly, clutter closets and end up in landfills. Learn more here.**

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a thoughtful closet by buying long-lasting and timeless pieces. Mend your clothes to extend their life, and use donation programs to dispose of unwanted items. • Check with your local thrift store to see if they can accept your clothing, shoes, and other wardrobe items for recycling.
4	Styrofoam (TM)	Packing peanuts, blocks, to-go boxes and containers	Styrofoam products are not accepted in curbside recycling programs, because they are difficult to sort from other materials and often break into small pieces, ending up as litter in our open spaces, rivers and oceans. The best place to put Styrofoam is in the garbage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some businesses collect Styrofoam for reuse and recycling, such as [<i>insert local examples, if applicable</i>]. • For more information on what to do with your Styrofoam, visit [<i>local gov. website, if applicable</i>].
5	Frozen food boxes	Ice cream boxes, butter boxes and microwavable meals	Frozen food boxes and other paper packaging intended for the refrigerator or freezer (like butter boxes and ice cream containers) often have a plastic coating, which keeps them from falling apart (which is a good thing), but makes them unrecyclable at a paper mill. The best place for frozen food boxes, and other coated paperboards that go in the refrigerator or freezer, is in the garbage.	
6	Food residue and liquids	Any item that's accepted for recycling in your area that still contains food or liquids	Put only empty, clean and dry items in your recycling bin. When containers with food or liquid residue are placed in a recycling bin, they can ruin an entire truckload of otherwise good paper and cardboard that could have been recycled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recyclable items don't have to be dishwasher clean. Empty them out, give it a quick rinse, shake off the water and voila! You are good to go! • Use a spoon, spatula or paper towel to scrape food waste into your compost bucket or trash. Then save the container until you are done with the dishes and use your dirty dishwater. A

				<p>quick swish or rinse with cold water will usually do the trick. After you rinse it out, shake off the water so other items won't get wet and throw them in your bin!</p>
7	Hoses, wires, chains and electric cords	Items that can "tangle" machinery	Hoses, wires, chains and electric cords can tangle themselves around other materials and machinery, which can cause extensive damage. Do not put these items in your recycling bin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To find a scrap metal recycling facility in your area, check https://iscrapapp.com/. • Extend the life of your hose by investing in a rubber one – they are more resistant to kinks and holes. • If you live in an area subject to harsh winters, bring your hose inside before snowfall to preserve its life.
8	Cups and to-go containers	Coffee cups and restaurant take-out boxes	To-go coffee cups and other to-go food containers are not accepted in recycling programs, because they are coated with plastic or wax that makes it difficult to separate from paper in the recycling process. These items should be put in the garbage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reusable coffee mugs and water bottles are a great, low-waste option for on-the-go.
9	Glass	Bottles and jars	Recycle glass in a separate container. Never mix glass with paper, plastic or metal recyclables. Glass mixed with other items can break and contaminate other recyclables, making them difficult or impossible to recycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can return an assortment of empty drink containers, including glass, to stores and redemption centers and receive the 10-cent refund value for each container returned. Learn more about Oregon's Bottle Bill programs here.

10	Padded and plastic shipping envelopes	Envelopes with bubble wrap inside	Padded and plastic shipping envelopes cannot be recycled at home. These items are made from multiple materials, which are difficult and labor-intensive to separate. The best place for padded and plastics shipping envelopes is in the trash (unless you can reuse them!).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid receiving more shipping envelopes, see if you can reuse, repair or borrow what you are looking for. Look into local shopping options before ordering online. • If you're sending something, try reusing any envelopes you may already have before buying a new one.
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* **Make Every Thread Count** is an Oregon public awareness campaign that encourages people in Oregon to think differently before buying clothes, make smarter choices at the register and extend the life of their clothing. The resource kit includes photos, infographics, cut-and-paste language and more at [DEQ's campaign webpage](#). These materials are available in English and Spanish.