



The Waste Not

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OUR VISION

To provide Brown County municipal commercial and industrial customers cost-effective and sustainable solid waste management systems with the focus on resource recovery primarily through recycling, and energy recovery

Editor:
Katie Platten

Contributors:
Mark Walter

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Recharge What You Know About Recycling	2
Reduce Your Impact: Clothing & Textiles	3
Holiday Hours	3
Master Recycler Classes	4

Robotics to Address Worker Shortages and Improve Recycling Efficiencies

Outagamie County, on behalf of the BOW partners of Brown, Outagamie, and Winnebago County, recently received a grant that will help with the cost of adding new technologies, in the form of artificial intelligence (AI) robotics, to aid in the plastics sorting process at the Tri-County Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Appleton.



Robotic Sorting Equipment

Currently, mixed plastics and polypropylene are sorted by hand at the MRF. Unfortunately, like many industries, the Tri-County MRF is facing a labor shortage that has required team members to shift among various sorting lines for more efficient and effective productivity.

The addition of robotics, currently scheduled for installation in November, will allow the MRF to focus staff on the higher-value-commodity sorting and perform quality control monitoring responsibilities, while robotics handle sorting on the less valuable, yet still important, mixed plastics sorting line.

The robots will be programmed to prioritize picking mixed plastics, followed by used beverage cans (UBC), polyethylene terephthalate (PET #1) and high-density polyethylene (HDPE #2). Additional benefits include the ability to adjust the robot's pick priority at any moment depending on the characterization of incoming material loads and creating flexibility to identify and separate other new or additional commodities as markets continue to change.



Credit: WLUK. Inside of Tri-County Material Recycling

With the addition of robotics, the MRF can continue to divert as much material as possible from landfills, while optimizing staff resources. This not only helps to lengthen the life of the BOW landfills but also helps improve the environment by repurposing existing materials.

Recharge What You Know About Recycling

We've all been told that materials such as paper, plastic and aluminum go into a recycling bin and that everything else goes into the trash. However, with changes in technology and the recycling industry, along with the creation of new products, the old ways of handling waste might not be the best way anymore. It's not that what was done in the past is wrong, it's just that systems have evolved to better dispose of and recycle materials that keep our planet healthy, create revenue streams and avoid safety dangers.

Take electronics and the batteries they contain. Many handheld devices contain batteries that cannot be or are hard to remove. In the past, you might have just thrown them in the garbage or put them in the recycling bin, hoping it was the right choice. Today, neither one is the right choice. Batteries and battery containing devices – especially those containing lithium batteries - are a fire hazard when placed in garbage or recycling. Because of this many municipalities are creating battery take back programs, like the Batteries NOW Included program at Brown County Resource Recovery. We'll take and dispose of household batteries and battery-containing devices for free.



And then there's the dilemma about plastic bags and plastic film. Plastic, in a bottle or container form, can be put in with your curbside recycling. However, bags and film are considered "tangles" because they can wrap around sorting equipment and lead to machinery breakdowns as well as posing a danger for employees having to remove the film by hand.

Most paper products continue to be recycled the normal way. However, shredded paper is an exception, it's better off disposed of in the garbage. When shredded paper is added to recycling, the small pieces can fly away and create unwanted litter in our communities or landfills and a mess in recycling facilities. Check in with local office supply stores or document management companies to see if they have opportunities to collect shredded paper for recycling.



It's important to know how your community approaches recycling and waste disposal because each municipality takes a slightly different approach. For those living in Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago Counties, there is a handy mobile app you can use called Betterbin. It allows you to simply scan a barcode and the app will tell you where it should go for disposal. Another option is the Tri-County Recycling's Waste Wizard where you can type in an item and be provided with locations and guidance on disposal in Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago counties. It always pays to stay up to date on what is and isn't recyclable because just like life constantly changes and evolves, so do the ways we dispose of and recycle materials.

Master Recycler Classes with Tri-County Recycling

Do you have what it takes to become a Master Recycler?

Take the first step and brush up your recycling skills with Tri-County Recycling's brand new Recycle Right Master Class! This is a FREE introductory program that will begin to give you the tools you need to teach your family, neighbors, friends, and coworkers how to recycle right. Learn what goes IN your recycle bin, what stays OUT, and get your recycling questions answered. Topics include why we recycle, a deep-dive through the Tri-County Recycling Facility, local recycling basics, common contaminants, and what happens to recyclable materials after they leave our sorting facility.

Attendees must sign up to attend.

Visit www.recyclomoretricity.org/classes/

Space is limited to attend one of our upcoming classes, check it out now!



Follow Us

For facts, general information and ideas on how to reduce waste, follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest! We post information you want to know several times a week.

If you are interested in reading more about a resource recovery topic online or in our newsletter let us know! We would love to hear from you.



Brown County Port & Resource Recovery Department

Recycling & Hazardous Material Recovery Facilities

2561 S. Broadway | Green Bay, WI 54304

Waste Transfer Station

3734 W. Mason | Green Bay, WI 54155

South Landfill

1258 Mill Road | Greenleaf, WI 54126

Phone: 920-492-4950

E-mail: bc_resource_recovery@browncountywi.gov

www.browncountyrecycling.org

Department Contacts

Dean Haen, Director

Chad Doverspike, Assistant Director

Mark Walter, Business Development Manager

Ben Hintz, Landfill Manager

Chris Blan, Resource Recovery Technician

Jon Logan, Resource Recovery Technician

Derek Tess, Resource Recovery Technician

Theresa Slavek, Accountant II

Melissa Martens, Account Clerk II

Katie Platten, Clerk/Typist II

