



# 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, repurposing and energy recovery

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## Lingering COVID-19 Related Waste

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was common to see N95, KN95, surgical or cloth masks everywhere. Not only on everyone's face, but littered on the street, in parking lots, and incorrectly thrown into the recycling bin. With masks now being used less frequently, fewer masks are being discarded and therefore fewer are being seen randomly strewn about as we go about our lives.



Image: UNSPLASH/Brian Yurasits

There is one area of the waste world where we continue to see the effects of the preventative measures everyone took during the pandemic – the world of hazardous & special wastes.

Many of the disinfectants and hand sanitizers, which were often bought in bulk, are reaching their expiration dates. In 2022, the Brown County Hazardous Material Recovery Program collected over 160 gallons of disinfectants and 27 gallons of hand sanitizers (in well over 1,000 two-ounce containers) from local businesses. Already in 2023, we are up to over 130 gallons of disinfectants and 620 gallons of hand sanitizers from businesses in Northeast Wisconsin!



Considering these same wastes are also generated from households, the total amount of these products that are discarded rises dramatically. Liquid chemicals can't be disposed of in the trash and most alcohol-based hand sanitizers are flammable. These products should be brought to the Brown County Hazardous Material Recovery facility as they expire or as you no longer need them.

Time will tell when we see the end of Covid related wastes. Until that happens, the Brown County Port & Resource Recovery Department will continue to offer safe and responsible disposal options.

## Extending Earth Day to Each Month, Make Eco-Conscious Efforts a Habit

“Make Earth Day Everyday”. This popular slogan has been all over social media recently especially as we got close to the month of April leading up to Earth Day. The phrase makes us think about doing more for the planet in everyday actions, like carrying reusable cutlery or using reusable bags at the grocery store. Celebrating the significance of Earth Day each year is a great learning experience, and organized efforts bring attention to issues of littering among other things. What things can we do and organize each month to keep up the momentum of Earth Day?



First, find an organization or charity that hosts clean-ups or events related to improving the planet. Try to schedule one weekend or day each month that you can dedicate to volunteering your time. A great place to start is to see if your area has a volunteer center, like the Volunteer Center of Brown County based in Green Bay. Check if your college or university has an environmental club. If there are no resources close to you, consider starting your own club or chapter!

While a big part of celebrating Earth Day is getting out into nature, sometimes the use of social media and technology can provide helpful information and educational materials. Find a challenge that speaks to you like a 30-day sustainable living challenge. Make sure your sources are legitimate and try to spread positivity! Following eco-friendly blogs and groups on social media can help you find opportunities and practices you might not have realized were possible.

Remind yourself why Earth Day is important and why we celebrate it. Consider picking up a few books on subjects like the history of environmentalism, the food system in America or the composition of soil and stories by Indigenous and POC (people of color) communities. Often keeping perspectives that are different from our own in our reading can positively affect our understanding and influence our habits. You can do Earth Day activities year-round to get you prepared to celebrate next year’s Earth Day with newfound purpose.



Brown  
County  
Library



## Increasing Number of Fire Incidents at Waste & Recycling Facilities, According to Waste Today

In a recent article in *Waste Today*, a publication about the waste and recycling industry, an article titled “Fire Incidents Increased at Waste, Recycling Facilities in 2022” discussed a reported six percent increase in reported fires at waste and recycling facilities in 2022 when compared to 2021. The article focused on the findings of a report by Fire Rover, a Michigan-based fire safety and suppression company, who recently published their sixth annual “Reported Waste & Recycling Facility Fires US/CAN”. Fire Rover’s report analyzed the number of reported fires in the US and Canada, which states and provinces reported the most fires, and likely reasons for the incidents.

Fire Rover reported that 50% of the fires were caused by lithium-ion batteries and 50% were caused by more traditional hazards like propane tanks, accelerants and chemicals, flares, hot coals, and cigarette butts.

Locally, the Brown County Port & Resource Recovery has had a number of smoke incidents and minimal flame and fire incidents though none to the extent that operations have closed or been delayed by more than a few hours. At the Recycling Transfer Station in Ashwaubenon, improper disposal of alkaline and lithium-ion batteries into curbside recycling have caused smoke and flames in the material pile twice in the last three years. When this happens, operators quickly isolate the material and move it out of the building so that the offending material can be suppressed with the assistance of local fire departments if needed. Remember, when you hear “Battery Recycling”, it NEVER means to put them in your recycling bin. Always check with your local and county disposal guides.



Credit: Irfan Khan Alvi / Getty Images



The Fire Rover reported noted that public educational and outreach efforts on proper disposal of hazardous materials and working in conjunction with fire departments on facility layout were efforts that can reduce fire incidents. The Brown County Hazardous Material Recovery Facility works hard to educate residents of N.E. Wisconsin on proper disposal of materials as well as to provide a residential drop off of materials at little to no cost. Find more information on what is accepted at [www.browncountyrecycling.org/hmr-acceptable-material](http://www.browncountyrecycling.org/hmr-acceptable-material).

## Waste Spotlight: Tangles

What are tangles and why is it important to keep them out of your recycling? Tangles are any materials that are long and skinny that can wrap around the sorting equipment at the Tri-County Recycling facility and include such things as ropes, cords, hoses, plastic straps and wires.

In Brown, Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties, these materials are NEVER acceptable in your curbside recycling bin or at any of the recycling facilities operated by the three counties. Tangles cannot be beneficially reused or recovered from the recycling stream. When tangles enter the recycling stream, they can wrap around machinery and cause delays and breakdowns in sorting equipment. Production and sorting halts, and staff have to climb into the machines and untangle, resulting in lost time and backups and potentially creating dangerous situations.

What should you do with these tangle materials? Take these to a drop-off location (scrap metal yards or landfills) or place them in the garbage.

Still not sure where to go? Use the Waste Wizard at Tri-County Recycling for exact details on proper disposal!



### Follow Us

For facts, general information and ideas on how to reduce waste, follow us on Facebook and Twitter! 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

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