



## Why Recycle?

As you know, recycling takes materials that would otherwise become waste and turns them into valuable resources. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, recycling, including composting, diverted 82 million tons of material away from landfills and incinerators in 2006, up from 34 million tons in 1990.

Recycling generates a host of environmental benefits including: energy conservation, reduction of green gas emissions, reduction of emissions of air and water pollutants and conservation of natural resources. Below please find some of these benefits, categorized by material type.

### Paper Facts

- In 2000, Illinois residents and businesses recycled 2,272,000 tons of paper – 350 pounds per person; but 379 pounds per person were sent to a landfill.
- Recycling one ton of paper saves: the equivalent of 17 trees, enough energy to power an average home for six months, 7,000 gallons of water and 60 pounds of pollutants from being released into the air.

### Aluminum Facts

- In 2000, Illinois residents and businesses recycled 2,879,000,000 aluminum cans - 222 cans per person; but 135 cans per person were sent to a landfill.
- Recycling one aluminum beverage can save enough energy to run a television for three hours OR operate a computer for three hours.

### Steel Facts

- In 2000, Illinois residents and businesses recycled 897,000,000 steel cans - 69 per person; but 49 cans per person still were sent to a landfill.
- Recycling one ton of steel saves: 2,500 pounds of iron ore, 1,400 pounds of coal and 120 pounds of limestone.

### Plastics Facts

- In 2000, Illinois residents and businesses recycled five pounds of plastic bottles per person; but 20 pounds per person were sent to a landfill.
- American use 2.5 million plastic bottles every hour. And, each year, Illinois residents use and dispose of 1.1 billion foam cups, enough to encircle the Earth 19 times.
- 50% of polyester carpet manufactured in the United States is made from recycled plastic bottles. To make one square foot of carpet, five two-liter bottles are required.

### Glass Facts

- In 2000, Illinois residents and businesses recycled 618,000,000 glass containers – 54 per person; but 88 glass containers per person were sent to a landfill.
- In 2000, 38% of all glass bottles were recycled nationwide.
- Every glass bottle recycled saves enough energy to light a 100-watt light bulb for four hours.

Source: Illinois Recycling Association