



STEEL RECYCLING STARTS IN THE HOME

A Guide To Residential Steel Recycling

What are steel cans?

We rely on steel cans for packaging our food in durable, tamper-resistant containers. You may not realize it, but you probably use at least one steel can every day. Steel cans package a variety of products, including fruits, vegetables, soups, sauces, meats, juice, pet food, cleaning products, shoe polish, paint and coffee. Steel cans are also something else—recyclable.



How do you prepare steel cans for recycling?

Basically, all you have to do is empty them. Place the lids inside the cans and recycle both. If your community recycling program accepts empty steel aerosol cans or empty steel paint cans, you should recycle these cans as well. Just make sure they are empty.

How do communities collect steel cans for recycling?

Through curbside collection, drop-off sites or multi-material buyback recycling centers. In some communities, household refuse may be sent to a resource recovery facility (or waste-to-energy facility), where the steel cans are magnetically removed for recycling. This means that the steel cans are automatically recycled even when they're placed in the trash.

Where else might steel cans be collected for recycling?

Anywhere they are used. Dockside recycling programs may be established at restaurants, hotels, hospitals, and many other establishments that have foodservice facilities.

What happens to steel cans after they are collected?

A recycling truck takes the steel cans and other materials from the curbside, drop-off site or buyback center and hauls them to a material recovery facility (MRF). At the MRF, the steel cans are magnetically separated from the other recyclables, crushed into large cubes called bales, then shipped to steel mills or foundries for recycling. The steel cans are then combined with other steel scrap and melted in a furnace to make new steel for new steel products.

What other steel products are recycled?

Many steel products are recycled every day. Steel from appliances, automobiles and construction materials is routinely recycled. Each year, more than 62 percent of the steel the domestic industry produces is recycled. That's a lot of steel!

What does it mean to "buy recycled?"

The term "buy recycled" refers to ways that you can help complete the recycling loop through buying products that are made of recycled materials. When you buy a steel product, whether it's a paper clip, an appliance or a steel-framed home, you can be sure you're "buying recycled."

What are the benefits of recycling steel?

Recycling steel helps save landfill space while providing a valuable scrap resource to the steel industry. Using old steel to make new steel also preserves natural resources and energy. For every ton of steel recycled, 2500 pounds of iron ore, 1400 pounds of coal and 120 pounds of limestone are conserved. And in a year, the steel industry conserves the equivalent energy to power about 18 million homes for 12 months.

What is the Steel Recycling Institute?

The Steel Recycling Institute (SRI), a unit of the American Iron & Steel Institute, educates the solid waste management industry, government, business and ultimately the consumer about the economic and environmental benefits of recycling steel. Through its four regional offices, SRI works to ensure the continuing development of the steel recycling infrastructure.