



Manufacturers Hold the Keys to Simpler Recycling

Kristen Lawton, Director of Recycling and Reduction

Figuring out what can and cannot be recycled can be confusing. There is a big difference between what people want to recycle and what manufacturers want to use in their products. A demand must exist for a commodity in order for it to be recycled. It would be great if all items could be recycled, but the reality is, they can't (yet).

Plastics are particularly challenging due to industry labeling that is found on almost every plastic item produced. Plastics typically have a number surrounded by a recycle symbol on them. The problem is, those numbers define what type of plastic the item is made of; they are not a good indicator of recyclability. Just because a company puts that symbol on an item, doesn't mean it was produced with recycling in mind. Not all plastics are created equal. The cost of sorting, melting and ultimately reusing certain types of plastic can be higher than simply producing those materials from scratch. When that's the case, there is no financial incentive for manufacturers to use that type of material...demand must be created.

Accountability offers a way forward. Advancing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation for packaging would make manufacturers financially responsible for the end-of-life management of their packaging. This would encourage them to design products using more recyclable materials, which would increase demand for these commodities.

It would also ease the financial disposal burden that currently rests on municipalities, entities like OCRRA and residents, who do not produce these items, but are left to figure out how to manage them.

More recyclable packaging across the board would clear up the confusion created by the sheer volume of non-recyclable packaging products currently being produced. In short, recycling would be simpler and recycling education would be more con-



Photo Credit: iStock, 2022.

Plastics recycling can be confusing. The recycling numbers on the bottom of a container do not indicate if an item is recyclable. Enacting an EPR law would reduce the number of non-recycling materials in our waste stream.

sistent across the state and beyond.

New York state already has EPR laws in place for electronic waste, rechargeable batteries, paint, mercury thermostats and pharmaceuticals. They make proper management of these items simple for residents and free of charge. OCRRA supports advancing packaging EPR legislation to reduce items in our waste stream that are difficult to recycle and to improve outcomes for items currently recycled.

States like Colorado and Maine have passed EPR packaging laws recently. Legislators in New York have been asked to consider several packaging EPR bills in the past few years, but those efforts have not yet led to the updated laws needed to make a measurable impact. Learn more about EPR

here: www.tinyurl.com/EPRGuide

Manufacturers hold the key to simpler recycling. If you support ending the production of hard to recycle products and packaging, contact your state legislators. Let them know recycling is too complex and packaging EPR laws need to be enacted. Visit www.tinyurl.com/AssemblyNY to search for your representative in the New York State Assembly. Visit www.tinyurl.com/SenateNY to search for your New York State Senator.

With a simple email or phone call, you can help improve recycling in our community and across the state. Together, our efforts can help save the world a little each day!

Kristen Lawton can be reached at klawton@ocrra.org.



ELECTRONICS RECYCLING..... PG 2

Get ready for new electronics collection rules in 2023, with free drop-offs.



PLASTICS RECYCLING.. PG 2

Ignore the numbers on the bottom of your containers! Pay attention to shapes.



GREEN GIFTS..... PG 3

Get eco-friendly holiday gift-giving ideas.



PACKAGING TIPS..... PG 5

Check out OCRRA's guide to properly managing shipping and packing materials.



GLASS RECYCLING..... PG 7

Glass recycling is ripe for improvements if lawmakers get on board.



PLASTIC



CURBSIDE RECYCLING



DON'T BAG RECYCLABLES

IGNORE NUMBERS; RECYCLE BY SHAPE

- Bottles: Beverages, soap, shampoo, squeeze, spray, etc. (no bottles that held toxics) *Empty, rinse and reattach cap.*
- Jars: Mayonnaise, sauce, nuts, jelly, etc. *Empty, rinse and reattach cap.*
- Jugs (items with a handle): Milk, orange juice, water, detergent, windshield fluid, etc. *Empty, rinse and reattach cap.*
- Stackable tubs (dairy/dairy alternative only): Butter, yogurt, cottage cheese, etc. *Empty, rinse and reattach cap.*



DROP OFF TO RECYCLE

- Plastic bags (clean and dry) *Recycle at large grocery and retail stores.*
- Electronics *Visit ocrra.org/ewaste for details*



TRASH

- Tanglers (cords, hoses, etc.)
- "Clamshells" (berry, salad, bakery cartons)
- Takeout or fast food boxes
- Disposable cups, lids and utensils
- Prescription vials
- Tires
- Containers that held toxics



RESIDENTIAL HOURS CHANGING AT ROCK CUT ROAD

Starting January 1, 2023
there are new residential drop-off hours

No appointment needed
Monday – Friday: 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Saturday: 8:00 a.m. to noon

Location:
5808 Rock Cut Road
Jamesville, NY 13078

Questions?
info@ocrra.org | 315-453-2866

Covered and Clean: Carts Improve Winter Recycling

You carefully separate your recyclables, placing them loosely in a blue bin. You even wait until the last minute before dragging it to the curb for your hauler. Then, just as the bin touches the ground, a snow drift covers everything in a layer of snow. Let's face it, soggy or frozen cardboard, newspapers and soft cover books are not ideal for sorting.

Large recycling containers with wheels and lids, or recycling carts, provide a major upgrade. They keep items covered and clean, improving the odds that your recyclables find their way into a new product, even after a snowstorm. Recyclables placed in open blue bins are more vulnerable to the elements, which means they're more likely to be improperly sorted or become trash.

There are many other year-round benefits with covered recycling carts. Sorting facilities won't have to send wet or frozen materials through machines multiple times. Carts also provide more room and reduce litter. Since all recyclables must be loose (not bagged or bundled), the cover ensures items inside won't blow across the block when the wind picks up. Carts are on wheels, making them easier to move. They can also be hooked to automated truck lifts, which helps haulers avoid injury.

OCRRA anticipates blue bins will be phased out in Onondaga County in the next two or three years. Some towns and villages have already started using carts. Call your municipality if you are eager to learn the local timeline in your community. Bin or cart, we are here to answer questions about what needs to be recycled. Visit OCRRA.org to search through our vast library of items and disposal directions.



NYS Electronics Recycling Law Changes

Kristen Lawton, Director of Recycling and Reduction

As of January 1, 2023, New York state is updating a 13-year-old law that requires consumers to recycle various electronics, such as computers, televisions, portable music devices, VCRs, DVD players and more.

In the short term, this means some existing drop-off locations across the state may no longer be options for electronic waste recycling. However, the remaining locations will be free!

This free drop-off is thanks to the extended producer responsibility (EPR) law that holds manufacturers responsible for the end-of-life management of their electronic items.

Since the full list of electronics drop-off locations is not defined at the time of publication, you can join OCRRA's email list for updates and details as they develop. Look for the green "Join our mailing list" section at the bottom of any page on OCRRA.org to register.



Photo Credit: iStock, 2022.

New York state is updating electronics recycling regulations and that will impact where you can drop off e-waste.

Reduce, Reuse, Repair Corner

Lisa Piering, Recycling Specialist

The best gifts are from friends who know the three R's: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. A few more green goals have cropped up over the years, including Redesign and Repair. The aim is to use fewer natural resources. That's a major challenge during the winter holidays. Need inspiration? Here are five fabulous green gift-giving ideas:



Photo Credit: Vecteezy, 2022.

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1 Avoid “fast fashion” or otherwise disposable items. Focus on gifts that last for years without replacements.
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2 Is there a broken item your loved one can't give up? Conspire to whisk it away to a repair shop or grab a gift card to cover the cost on their schedule. Just be sure the aged patina isn't what they like best about their treasure.
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3 Yes, you can give the gift of time! Hire a babysitter, snow shoveler or a personal chef for one night. This should go beyond your assigned chores, if you share a home with the recipient.
- 
4 Plenty of other experiences can become “trashless” gifts, ranging from a concert, sporting event, movie or theatre night. Consider an escape room experience, axe throwing or dinner.
- 
5 Gift a fun class. Your loved one or co-worker can learn karate, dancing and even scuba diving. Websites like Teachable, Wondrium and SkillShare offer online lessons for everything from history to gardening.

Lisa Piering can be reached at lpiering@ocrra.org.



Recycling Rhoda

Paper Recycling

Dear Rhoda,

Why can't paper bags be used to bundle other paper? It's all paper, which is recyclable!

— Baldwinsville Bundler

Dear Bundler,

We've come a long way, sunshine! Here's the deal: Don't do it. NEVER bag or bundle anything that you place in your recycling bin or cart (not in paper or plastic bags). Putting papers in a brown bag is past practice. Stick with me. I appreciate your curiosity.

Modern technology has evolved from the days when bundles of paper were often pulled by hand. Machines have become much more efficient in separating massive quantities of recyclables from tens of thousands of homes and businesses. That

is a good thing! But, the current process is designed to work with loose items.

Let me paint a picture. Imagine a massive warehouse of buzzing machines with air blowers pushing paper one way, magnets pulling metal and bouncing platforms capturing plastic. Items trapped in bundles or bags (paper or plastic) don't blow, stick or bounce properly. They end up with the residue (also known as trash).

New technology offered a big boost to the separation process. The best way to support that advancement is an adjustment on the human side. That's you - the former bundler. Use two bins if you are worried about loose items riding the wind on collection day. Stack the bin with heavier items on top of the bin with lighter items. Voila! You have a lid that prevents litter!

You can still add empty and flattened paper bags to your bin, just don't fill them. Look, I know you didn't bring up plastic bags, but I can't help myself. This is important: obviously, plastic bags don't belong in your recycling bin. The recycling you put inside plastic bags will end up as trash. Loose bags wrap around sorting equipment and slow down everything or they get mixed in with the paper, reducing its value. Large retailers, chain grocery stores and pharmacies accept clean, dry plastic bags for recycling. Search “plastic bags” on OCRRA.org to see a list of locations.

Yours truly,

Recycling Rhoda

No Christmas Lights in the Recycling Bin

Tammy Palmer, Public Information Officer



Photo Credit: iStock, 2022.

Never put holiday lights in recycling bins. They wrap around and damage equipment at the sorting facility.

It's the most wonderful time of year if twinkling lights feed your need for cheer. When you get stuck searching for that one bulb that does not work on a string of lights, frustration may lead you straight to the trash can. Take a deep breath. You have options.

Bruin Recycling in Liverpool and Bodow Recycling, Inc. in Syracuse accept Christmas lights year-round. Call in advance for program details, as some preparation is required.

Pack them up for the next trip to the hardware store. Some Lowe's stores will accept old lights during the holidays. Call ahead since store policies, hours and deadlines vary. Hint: Some locations stop accepting drop-offs in late December.

Consider a mail-back program, such as the one offered by **HolidayLEDs.com**.

Maybe you are downsizing to a smaller tree and do not need as many lights. If there is no damage and they still work, thrift stores are a great option to avoid throwing away lights. The Salvation Army Thrift Store, Goodwill and Thrifty Shopper request that lights are neatly wrapped and tied, to avoid a mess of tangled lights on their shelves.

If you must dispose of holiday lights at your home, place them in the trash. Strings of holiday lights should NEVER go into your recycling bin in Onondaga County. Those long strings wrap tightly around equipment at the sorting center where curbside recyclables are separated. When machines are damaged or shut down to remove the lights, the recycling process is far less efficient.

Tammy Palmer can be reached at tpalmer@ocrra.org.

Recycle Real Christmas Trees

Tammy Palmer, Public Information Officer

As the calendar flips to January, lines of Balsam, Douglas and Fraser firs appear on curbsides in many neighborhoods. If your municipality doesn't offer pick-up service, OCRRA has two sites where real Christmas trees are accepted.

In 2023, drop-offs are welcome at the Amboy or Jamesville Compost Sites, Monday through Friday, Jan. 2 - 12, from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Bonus: There is no fee to drop off a real Christmas tree and you don't need a compost site pass.

The best part? A little piece of that tree may end up in a garden near you this spring. OCRRA grinds the trees into mulch that residents can purchase when it's time to prepare for planting and landscaping.

You don't want bits of plastic, metal and glass in that mulch, so be sure to remove all decorations, including tinsel and garland. Place decorative items, along with wreaths, in your trash.

Artificial trees do not belong at OCRRA Compost Sites. If your hauler doesn't accept them as trash, consider the Rock Cut Road Drop-off Site. Fees are listed at **OCRRA.org**.

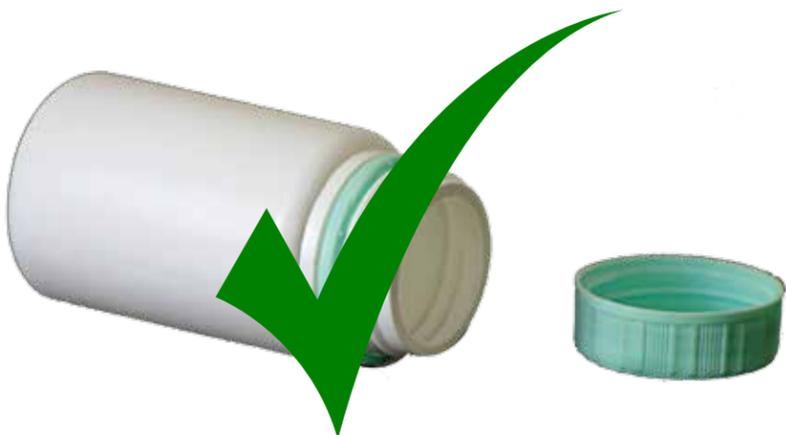
Some thrift stores will take artificial trees as donations. But, their rules vary. For example, they may require the original box for packaging. Call ahead and check your local store's policy before making the trip.

Tammy Palmer can be reached at tpalmer@ocrra.org.



Photo Credit: OCRRA, Syracuse, 2022.

Recycle or Not?



YES

Medicine bottles, with a neck, that are larger than 3" go in the recycle bin.



NO

Cylindrical orange / brown prescription vials go in the trash.

Photo Credit: Pixabay, 2022.

FACT: Ornaments, including tinsel, should be removed before you drop off Christmas trees at OCRRA Compost Sites.

Packing Materials: Recycle, Drop Off or Toss?

The popularity of online shopping spiked during the pandemic and many consumers are still enjoying the convenience of a doorstep delivery. It is more important than ever to manage shipping and packing materials properly. Don't guess! Use this handy chart as a guide.



Plastic bubble mailer and film plastic pouch.



Drop Off to Recycle: Large retailers, chain grocery stores and pharmacies are required to accept clean / dry film plastics for recycling. Cut off and throw away labels first.



Trash: If you cannot take these materials to a big box store, throw them away. Film plastics wrap around equipment at sorting facilities and contaminate recyclable paper.



Air pillows and bubble wrap.



Drop Off to Recycle: These can also be taken to big box stores for recycling. Puncture and flatten the air pillows first.



Trash: If you are unable to drop these materials off at a store, throw them away.



Cardboard, Amazon's padded paper mailer (white dots inside) and plain Kraft paper.



Curbside Recycling: Place all of these items in your curbside recycling bin or cart. Break down cardboard boxes into pieces no larger than 3'x3'. Place flattened cardboard inside or under the recycling container; never bundle. All items must be loose for easy sorting at the recycling facility.



Molded paper pulp, Styrofoam, and mixed material mailers (ex. paper envelope with plastic or fiber lining).



Trash: Throw all of these items away. Molded paper pulp has been recycled so many times the fibers are not large enough to recycle again. All types of Styrofoam go in the trash, including packing peanuts. While the mailers shown here have paper on the outside, different material on the inside means they must go in the trash.

State-of-the-Art System Monitors Waste-to-Energy Journey

Cristina Alburnio, PE, Agency Engineer

More than 361,000 tons of Onondaga County's waste is managed by the Waste-to-Energy Facility each year. Robust engineering controls ensure this is done in an environmentally responsible way, in accordance with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) requirements.

The Waste-to-Energy Facility's annual stack tests, highlighted in our fall newsletter, only scratch the surface of these requirements. A Continuous Emission Monitoring System (CEMS) measures the concentration of potential air pollutants every minute, 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The CEMS completes more than 30 million monitoring events each year, offering reliable oversight to the Facility's operations.

By operating under negative pressure (meaning air never leaks out), any gas passing through the system is monitored by the CEMS before reaching the stack. The gas, commonly called flue gas, is sampled by the CEMS before and after reaching Air Pollution Control (APC) equipment in each of the system's three independent processing units.

Along the way, the flue gas is scrubbed, or cleaned, by APC equipment using reagents (carbon, ammonia and lime) and a system of mechanical filters. The results are significant. More than 99.9% of what is released in the Facility's stack is what you would typically find in air (water vapor, nitrogen, oxygen, and carbon dioxide). What remains falls well below federal and state standards, due to careful monitoring by the CEMS and effective APC equipment. Those "clouds" you see on cooler days coming out the Facility's stack are simply water vapor.

While CEMS produces ongoing results, data is reported quarterly to the NYSDEC and annually to the USEPA. The system is calibrated and maintained regularly to ensure accuracy. Operators refer to CEMS results every minute of every day to confirm the APC equipment is working effectively.

You can compare live CEMS results with permitted limits here: www.tinyurl.com/LiveCEMS

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Photo Credit: OCRRA, Syracuse, 2022.

A Continuous Emission Monitoring System (CEMS) measures every minute of output at the Waste-to-Energy Facility, where trash is converted to electricity.

OCRRA and Covanta Hit a Mercury Collection Milestone

Maria Bianchetti, Recycling Specialist

Nearly 100 people showed up for the ninth annual Mercury Thermometer and Thermostat Collection Event! Onondaga County residents brought in 89 mercury thermometers and 51 mercury thermostats for recycling. Their efforts keep 404 grams of mercury out of the waste stream, equivalent to the amount of mercury in 20,200 compact fluorescent lightbulbs.

Since Covanta and OCRRA partnered to create this safe recycling program, more than 5,300 grams of mercury has been collected. That adds up to the amount you'd find in more than 1.3 million CFLs.

You don't have to catch a collection event for proper disposal. Thermometers are managed all year through OCRRA's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Program. Review the full list of acceptable items and then gather all of your HHW for one trip. This makes OCRRA's program more cost-effective and allows us to offer this service at no cost to residents. Visit www.tinyurl.com/OCRRAtoxics for details or to make an appointment. Search www.thermostat-recycle.org for locations where you can dispose of mercury thermostats, as they are not accepted at OCRRA's Household Hazardous Waste Program.

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Photo Credit: OCRRA, Syracuse, 2022.

Sarah Schermerhorn of Cicero, drops off a mercury thermometer at the 2022 Mercury Therm Event. Covanta's Paul Abt gives her an OCRRA newsletter and \$10 gift card to Lowe's. More than 5,300 grams of mercury has been collected over the past decade through this program.



From the Executive Director's Desk...

It Is Time to Expand the Bottle Bill

Kevin Spillane, Executive Director, OCRRA

The New York State Pollution Prevention Institute did a study on the expansion of the Bottle Bill just before the pandemic, which may be one of the reasons it didn't get a lot of attention. The study determined that adding a 5-cent deposit on wine and liquor bottles would increase their recycling rate by 65%. When these items are turned in at redemption centers or through reverse vending machines at retail shops, there is a vast improvement in operations and capacity at facilities where recyclables are sorted.

So, why hasn't New York state moved forward with this change? Will just 5 cents convince people to add a few more items to their recycling list? To answer those questions, we must start at the beginning of this story.

When a New York state law began requiring recycling programs more than 30 years ago, newspapers, cardboard, metal cans, plastics and glass were identified as targets to collect and eventually sell as commodities. Over time, we evolved from a dual-stream sorting process,

when paper and containers were kept separate, to a single stream process in which items are mixed curbside and sorted at a material recovery facility, or MRF for short.

We have also learned glass is a problem. Homeowners drop it in a curbside recycling bin, then glass is dropped into the collector's compactor and dumped on the MRF floor. Small broken pieces get mixed with dirt, paper, plastic and other small materials circulating through the sorting facility. The result is far too dirty to be sold or reused for new bottles. Worse yet, paper and other recyclables contaminated along the way will lose value. The abrasive bits of broken glass damage and wear down sorting equipment.

For now, all of that broken and dirty glass is beneficially used in road base construction and as alternative cover at landfills (instead of using soil to cover the daily waste deposited). However, it is not used to create new bottles. Clean recycled glass could be reused infinitely. The bottom line?

The current curbside method for recycling wine and liquor bottles is ripe for improvements.

The comprehensive Pollution Prevention Institute study reviewed ten states with redemption programs at the time, including California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Michigan, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon and Vermont. Researchers found glass recycling rates are 40% higher in states with a bottle bill. The highest redemption rate of 89% was found in Michigan, where the set deposit value is ten cents per container.

OCRRA explored alternatives and partnered with local bottle redemption centers throughout Onondaga County in 2021. Even without the incentive of a deposit on wine and liquor bottles, the program collected more than 30,000 pounds of glass within six months, doubling the number of incidental drop-offs previously. Given the opportunity, Onondaga County residents chose to recycle their glass bottles in a better way. The program was so successful that many

redemption centers ran out of room for non-deposit glass. As a result, the program has been halted.

Container Recycling Institute President Susan Collins told Waste Dive, "There's an opportunity to have wine and liquor bottle recycling rates at a very high level. That's through adding wine and liquor bottles to the deposit program."

OCRRA echoes this sentiment. Then, and only then, will worthwhile programs like ours be sustainable. The industry is poised to significantly improve glass recycling in New York if they have a path to build the financial support and infrastructure needed for these valuable commodities.

This brings us back to that lingering question. Why hasn't New York state moved forward with this change? You can make a difference. Join a growing call for better glass recycling. Contact your state legislators and tell them it's time to add wine, liquor and other non-deposit beverage bottles to the Bottle Bill.

Kevin Spillane can be reached at kspillane@ocrra.org.



Photo Credit: iStock, 2022.

Glass used to make wine and liquor bottles can be collected at the curb, but it breaks and contaminates loads of other recyclables. The pieces of glass left behind are too dirty to create new bottles. Expanding New York State's Bottle Bill could make it easier for redemption centers to begin collecting the glass, keeping it clean and separate from plastic, metal and paper.

FACT: Window glass is not the same as glass found in drink and food bottles. Donate or safely place window glass in the trash.

Winter Recycling Tips

Snow, ice, wind and frigid temperatures create extra challenges for your hauler. Here are a few winter habits you can adopt for a smoother recycling season.

- 1** Prevent litter. If you have blue bins: use two blue bins. Place lightweight items in one bin and heavier items in the other; stack the heavier bin on top of the lighter one, creating a lid. Recyclables should always be placed loose in your recycling containers. Items in bags, whether paper or plastic, end up as trash at the sorting facility.
- 2** If possible, avoid placing items by the curb the night before your pick-up, to minimize weather exposure. Dry materials are readily sortable at the facility. Wet or frozen items contaminate other recyclables, devaluing them. If there is too much contamination, entire bales of recyclables may be thrown out!
- 3** Making room for your holiday haul? Donate items that someone else could use, instead of trashing them. Declutter, reduce waste and give someone else a gift.



Photo Credit: iStock, 2022.

OCRRA Team Update

You may recognize the newest member of our OCRRA team! Tammy Palmer joined us in late September as the public information officer. Previously, she spent more than two decades as a television news anchor and reporter, delivering stories about life in Central New York. Now, she'll play a key role in sharing information about OCRRA's important programs and services. Palmer works closely with Kristen Lawton, who previously filled the PIO position for many years before her promotion to director of recycling. If you have questions for our new public information officer, her email address is tpalmer@ocrra.org.



Tammy Palmer



QUESTION OF THE QUARTER

Q: There are so many different types of egg cartons, I'm not sure whether to recycle or throw them away. Are they recyclable?

A: Great question! Let's make this simple. Throw away egg cartons. Since there are different materials used to make this packaging, we will explain the details. But, the results are always the same. Throw away egg cartons you no longer need.

Styrofoam never belongs in your blue bin, in any form. Always throw away Styrofoam packaging materials, unless you can reuse them for crafts or packing.

Plastic egg cartons do not fit our recycling guidelines (only recycle plastic bottles, jars, jugs and stackable tubs for dairy or dairy substitutes). Put them in the trash or reuse them at home for painting and other fun art projects.

Paper pulp is tricky. Do not wishcycle it. This material has been recycled so many times that the fiber is too small to recycle again. Reuse, compost or put them in the trash.

Recap: If you cannot reuse them, Styrofoam, plastic and paper pulp egg cartons always go into the trash, where they will eventually be made into electricity at the Waste-to-Energy Facility.



Follow OCRRA on Facebook and ask us all your recycling and disposal questions!

Mark Your Calendar

LEY CREEK TRANSFER STATION

Closed Until Further Notice

Use Rock Cut Road Transfer Station in Jamesville.

OCRRA'S ROCK CUT ROAD AND AMBOY SITES ARE OPEN

**Mon., Dec. 26
Mon., Jan 2**

All other sites are closed.

JAMESVILLE COMPOST SITE CLOSED FOR SEASON

The site reopens April 6, 2023

The Amboy Compost Site remains open year-round.

HOUSEHOLD TOXICS DROP-OFF

Mon., Thurs., Fri. by Appointment

Miller Environmental Group
8:00 am–3:00 pm
Register at OCRRA.org.

FACT: The Jamesville Compost Site is closed until April 2023. Customers are welcome to use the Amboy Compost Site.