



VINYL. IT'S RECYCLABLE.

For more information about
the recyclability of PVC
or its role in the solid waste
stream, contact:

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VINYL:

Part
of the
Recycling
Solution

Recovering
PVC Packaging
from the
Solid Waste
Stream

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Like all types of plastic packaging, PVC (polyvinyl chloride, or vinyl) packaging is used to help retain product freshness, improve product safety and increase consumer convenience. Thanks to packaging products like vinyl, containers are lighter weight and shatter-resistant, and conveniences like blister packaging of single-dose medicines and pour spouts for vegetable oils are possible.

PVC also is one of the most environmentally sound materials in existence. It is an inert, stable material that can be landfilled safely. It can be processed as safely as any other material in incinerators, and it is eminently recyclable.

Here are some facts about the role that vinyl packaging can play in reducing solid waste totals via recycling.

PVC Is a Small, but Recoverable, Portion of the Waste Stream

Currently, vinyl packaging constitutes only about 5% of all plastics used in packaging. Plastic packaging in turn, represents only about 3-5% of all materials found in the solid waste stream. As a result, only about two to three-tenths of one percent of the waste stream actually is composed of PVC packaging, but much of this quantity is suitable for recycling.

PVC Has a Proven Record of Recyclability

One of the first recycling programs for PVC was undertaken in Europe several years ago. There, vinyl containers used for bottled water were collected and reprocessed into electrical wire sheathing.

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Today, in Europe, recycled PVC bottles are being converted into such items as profile extrusions and coextruded foam core pipe. In the United States, several enterprises have begun collecting one-time use and short-term use vinyl products and recycling them into drain pipe and wood-substitute products. In addition, a number of pilot programs currently are underway in this country that have been designed specifically to demonstrate the feasibility of collecting and recycling post-consumer vinyl bottles. Early results have revealed no technical barriers to full-scale programs.

PVC Poses No Unusual Problems In Source Separation

Clear vinyl bottles destined for recycling easily can be separated out of the waste stream via visual inspection because of their glass-like clarity and gloss and distinctive mold mark. Opaque vinyl bottles or composite plastic bottles that contain PVC can be included in any mixed plastics reclamation program. The vinyl industry also supports a new voluntary container coding system developed by the Society of the Plastics Industry that facilitates container identification and separation.

PVC Works In Commingled Programs

The Center for Plastics Recycling Research at Rutgers University and the Plastics Recycling Applied Research Institute (an industry, university and government cooperative program in Massachusetts) both have established programs to evaluate the feasibility of recycling mixed – or commingled – plastics. Results of these programs indicate that vinyl products can be incorporated into commingled feedstocks without affecting the processability or durability of the finished product.

PVC Is Easily Processed for Reuse

Vinyl packaging that has been collected for recycling is no more difficult to process than any other type of plastic. Once caps have been removed, the vinyl containers simply are detergent washed and put through a chopper or grinder. The dried regrind is ready for use in a number of applications and can be extruded or molded using standard thermoplastic processing equipment.

PVC Recycling Markets Already Exist

Research indicates that a ready market for recycled vinyl already exists among some of the largest volume, longest established applications for PVC. Recycled vinyl already is being used to manufacture large diameter drainage pipe, for instance

PVC Is a Long-Term Recycling Solution

Drainage pipe made from recycled vinyl and wood-substitute products like landscape timbers made from commingled vinyl are long-term, durable applications that will not reappear in the waste stream for many years. In addition, the use of PVC in products like these helps to conserve other valuable resources such as wood and iron ore.

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