

Film and Flexible Packaging Webinar – July 30

Questions & Answers

Q: Does contamination at drop-off sites (or other collection points) impact the process?

A: Yes – contamination in store drop-off bins can hurt the recycling process. If material is excessively contaminated, it may get rejected by the purchaser.

At the front of store, common contaminants include paper receipts and sanitary wipes, which are often provided by the store. Paper labels adhered to film mailers are also showing up as more e-commerce packaging shifts to film mailers to replace cardboard boxes.

At the back of the store, eager employees will sometimes place shelf tags and plastic strapping in with the film. These materials are also considered contaminants and should not be added to film bales.

Good signage and employee training can help reduce contamination. Placing a waste container near sanitary wipes in stores can help keep the wipes out of recycling bins.

Q: For film packaging that previously contained food (i.e. bread bags), is there any concern with food particles left behind on the bag? Do you need to rinse these out and dry them or can they be recycled as is?

A: All film should be “clean and dry”. Because film is light weight, it is often stored for long periods of time before it gets transported and processed. Food particles can attract critters of all kinds, and wet film can get moldy.

Crumbs can simply be shaken out. If you choose to rinse something out or have something like an ice bag with a bit of water, it is best to let it dry before bundling up and placing in a bin.

Q: Do you have a list of retailers that participate in store drop-off recycling?

A: An extensive list of drop off locations can be found [here](#).

The team that manages this site is very responsive, so if you would like to offer any additional locations or corrections you can write to them at: help@plasticfilmrecycling.org

There may be additional drop-off sites listed by individual municipalities.

Q: How do you know store drop-off locations are definitely recycling the material?

If a major retailer is making the effort to collect film, they likely have every intention of recycling the material. In some cases (i.e. if it's excessively contaminated or wet) the film may not be suitable for processing and they may have to discard it. If this is observed routinely, I'd suggest reaching out to a store manager to ask what's going on.

Q: Store drop off containers are often pretty ugly/dirty. Does any stakeholder have an interest in providing clean attractive containers?

A: On the bright side, a well-worn bin indicates high traffic and use - but it could be less inviting to new participants.

Two of the leading consumers of retail film are Novolex and Trex. Both companies work with retailers and community partners in various ways to provide bins, signage and more.

For Novolex, program info can be found [here](#).

For Trex, program info can be found [here](#).

The Wrap Recycling Action Program (W.R.A.P.) will also partner with municipalities to provide collection bins and signage. You can contact them by filling out an online form [here](#).

If other stakeholders offer bins, please contact to [Laura Thompson](#) directly to let us know.

Q: Are the “reusable” bags in bag ban states still accepted since they are a thicker plastic?

A: Many of the large, square bottom reusable bags that are given away or sold by retailers are often made of recycled PET or woven polypropylene. These are NOT recyclable.

However, some states (often where bag bans are in place) require retailers provide ‘reusable’ polyethylene (PE) bags that are a thicker version of traditional plastic shopping bags. Those *are* recyclable via store drop-off.

As noted in the webinar – consider the stretch test. If you can stretch the bag by pushing your thumb through it, it’s likely PE and therefore recyclable store drop-off. Also be on the lookout for the How2Recycle label, developed by Sustainable Packaging Coalition. If you see a label with the How2Recycle store drop-off marking at the center, you can be sure it’s ok to place in the store drop-off bin.

Q: What about bubble wrap?

A: Yes, bubble wrap can be recycled via store drop-off, as well as air pillows that are now commonly used in e-commerce. For air pillows, it’s best to deflate before recycling.

Q: Cereal bags?

A: With cereal bags – it depends. Look for the How2Recycle label that will tell you what to do with the box *and* the bag.

If it’s a resealable standup pouch (used often for granola products) – it is most likely multiple layers of different materials and NOT recyclable. However, companies are innovating new packaging types, allowing some of these pouches to feature the How2Recycle store drop-off label.

